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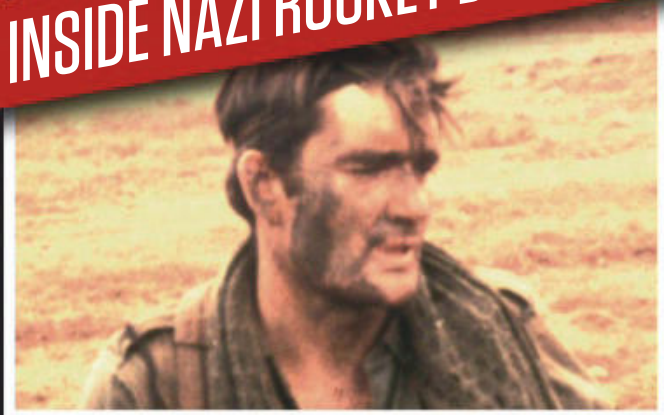
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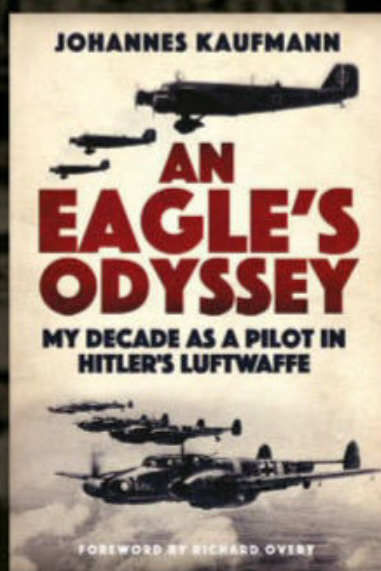
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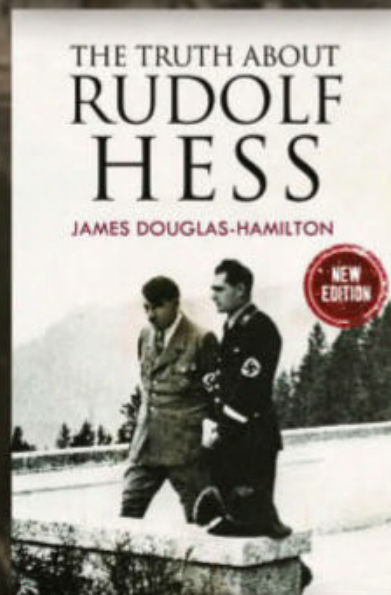
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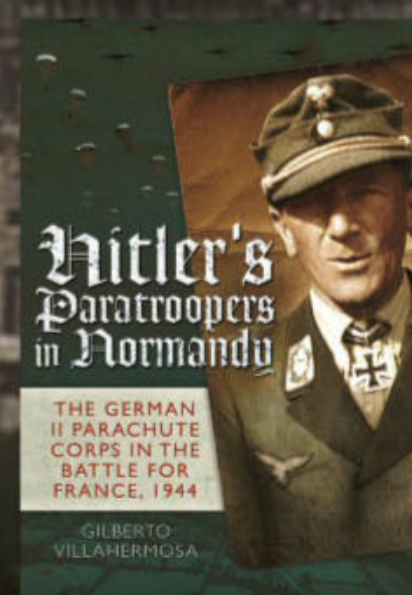
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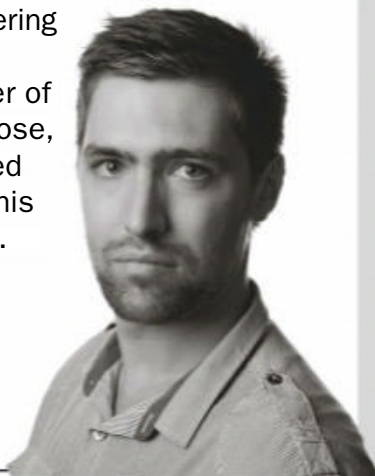
The "miracle terror weapon" V1 rocket bomb (buzz bomb) being pushed into place on mobile rocket launchers in Northern France

# Welcome

**H**idden in the countryside of Pas-de-Calais, France, sits a concrete fortress, designed to unleash one of WWII's most terrifying weapons: the V-2 rocket. Known today as La Coupole, the bunker stands as a sobering reminder of one of history's darkest periods.

Although the facility was silenced by the RAF in the summer of 1944, 75 years ago, before it could fulfil its destructive purpose, 'vengeance weapons' continued to be launched from occupied France and elsewhere, claiming thousands of civilian lives. This issue Mike Jones explores more about this horrific campaign.

  
**Tim Williamson**  
Editor-in-Chief



## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

This month Tom spoke with veteran and author Dr Alastair MacKenzie. In an incredible military career spanning 30 years, he has served in the New Zealand Army, the British Parachute Regiment and the SAS to name but a few (page 38).



### DAMIEN LEWIS

An award-winning and bestselling author, Damien is an expert on Special Forces history, from WWII to modern conflicts. On page 66 he shares the thrilling account of SOE Captain Mike Lees, as he battled behind the lines in Italy.



### MURRAY DAHM

For this issue's Heroes of the Victoria Cross, Murray recalls the incredible story of Rambahadur Limbu, of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles, who fought during the Malayan Emergency (page 50).







# HITLER'S VENGEANCE

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After years of failed campaigning, in this clash Bolivar and his army sat on the cusp of victory

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The wars of independence saw the emergence of the first 'strong men' military leaders

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Aristocrats, guerrilla fighters, politicians and generals were all pivotal in the wars with Spain

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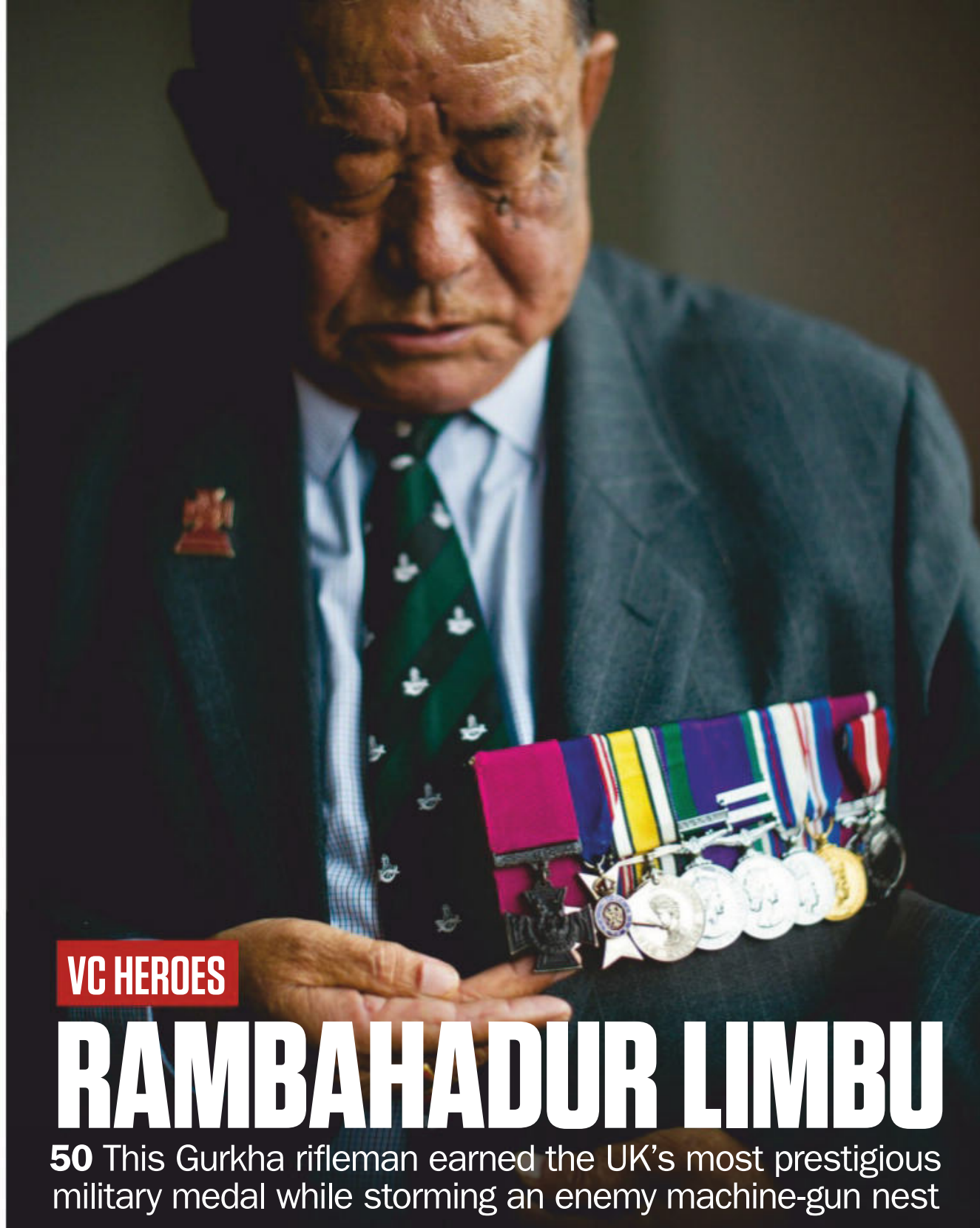


Great Battles

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**56** British and Sikh forces clash during this bloody but decisive battle in the Punjab

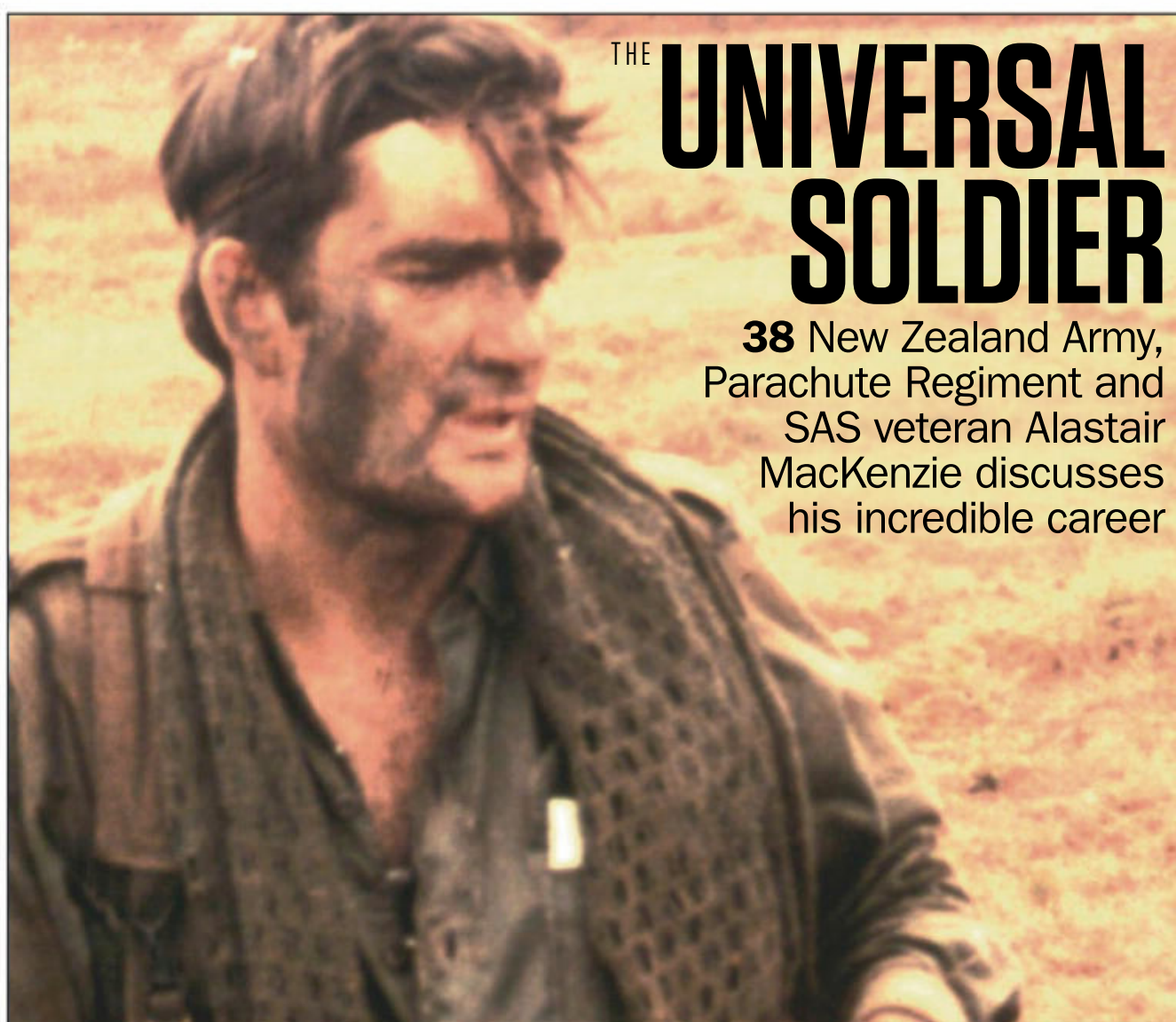




**VC HEROES**

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This Gurkha rifleman took out an MG nest during the Malayan Emergency

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This hardy medieval general was one of the instrumental leaders in the Hussite Wars

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Vengeance weapons

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This rare object originally pointed towards the famous battlefield









# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## A ROYAL MESS

Taken: **11 September, 1940**

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth stand among the rubble of Buckingham Palace's chapel, destroyed by a German bomb. Although the palace was bombed several times during the war, the King and his family refused to leave the danger of the capital. "I am glad we have been bombed." The Queen later commented . "Now we can look the East End in the eye."





Image: TopFoto





**WAR<sup>in</sup>  
FOCUS**  
**SIESTA IN SICILY**

*Taken: c. 1943*

Sgt Norwood Dorman, of Benson, North Carolina, takes a rest by a WWI memorial in Brolo, Sicily.

The invasion of the Mediterranean island, codenamed Operation Husky, was co-ordinated from nearby Malta, and consisted of airborne and amphibious landings. Although the invasion forces encountered difficult weather conditions, the island was taken by August 1943.





# **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

## **BEACHED KNIGHT**

*Taken: c. October 1983*

The wreckage of a downed American CH46 Sea Knight aircraft sits on a Grenadan beach in the aftermath of the US intervention on the island. Operation Urgent Fury, the invasion of Grenada by US forces in 1983, was launched to remove suspected Marxist rebels from the island, which the US Government claimed, posed a threat to US citizens.













# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## THE BATTLE OF HANAU

*Painted: 1824*

In this scene, the famous French military artist Horace Vernet depicts the Austro-Bavarian cavalry charging the French Grand Battery during the Battle of Hanau (1813). In command of the French Grand Battery is General Antoine Drouot, seen here on the right side of the painting, with an Austrian cavalryman moving to attack him.



## VENEZUELAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

A republic of Venezuela is proclaimed in an attempt to become the first Spanish colony to gain independence. Bolívar is a key figure in a faltering, prolonged conflict that ultimately results in Venezuelan sovereignty.

### TIMELINE OF THE...

# BOLIVARIAN WARS

The Venezuelan revolutionary Simón Bolívar led and influenced several wars that liberated large parts of South America from Spanish rule

1810-23

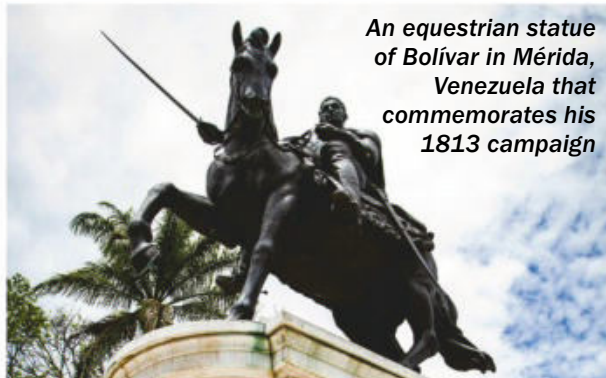
January-August 1813

15 June 1813

31 July 1813

## ADMIRABLE CAMPAIGN

Bolívar invades Venezuelan territory to renew the faltering fight for independence. Beginning in New Granada, his forces cross the Andes and continue through Mérida and Trujillo. A Spanish army capitulates near Caracas and republican forces gain control of western Venezuela.



An equestrian statue of Bolívar in Mérida, Venezuela that commemorates his 1813 campaign

## "DECREE OF WAR TO THE DEATH"

With few soldiers and using lightning tactics, Bolívar issues a decree that permits atrocities against Spanish royalists who attempt to block Venezuelan independence. The last sentence states, "Spaniards ... count on death, if you [do] not actively work in favour of the independence of America."



Bolívar signs the decree on campaign in the presence of his subordinates

Bolívar's Venezuelan soldiers are assisted by troops from rebellious New Granada



© Encels

## BATTLE OF TAGUANES 01

Venezuelan revolutionaries led by Bolívar defeat numerically superior Spanish forces commanded by Colonel Julián Izquierdo. Izquierdo is killed and the republicans are able to capture Valencia and Caracas within a day of each other.





Local nobles attempt to impose a pro-Spanish junta in Caracas, April 1810. Other juntas subsequently form that do not recognise Spanish rule

## “BRITISH LEGION VOLUNTEERS PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE BY EXECUTING A BAYONET CHARGE”

### VARGAS SWAMP BATTLE 02

A combined Venezuelan-New Granadan army under Bolívar successfully prevents Spanish forces from entering Santafé de Bogotá after crossing a swamp. British Legion volunteers play a decisive role by executing a bayonet charge. The revolutionary victory is secured by a cavalry charge.



This memorial is the largest in Colombia and commemorates the 14 Venezuelan lancers who successfully charged the Spanish at the Vargas Swamp

© Luis Hoyos

1819-20

25 July 1819

7 August 1819



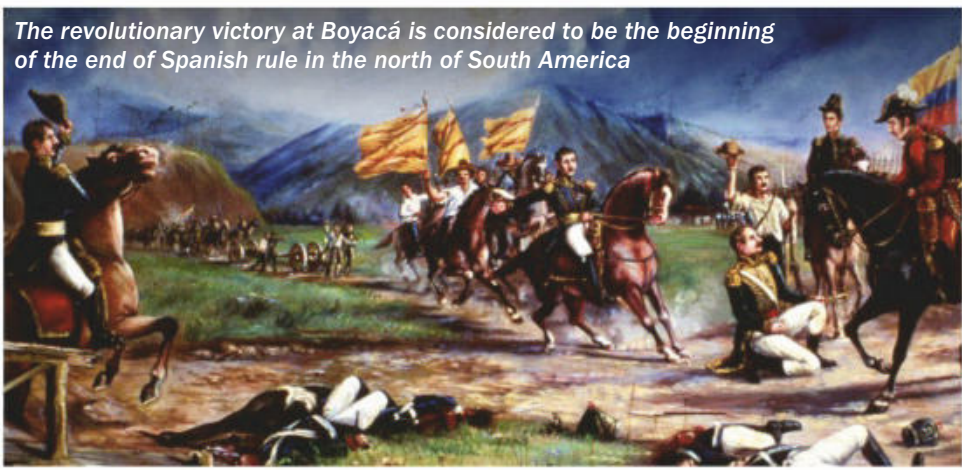
### LIBERATION OF NEW GRANADA

To consolidate the independence of Venezuela, Bolívar aims to liberate New Granada in arguably his most audacious campaign. After a legendary crossing of the Andes, the revolutionaries surprise Spanish forces and secure New Granada's freedom.

An 1857 painting of Bolívar crossing the Andes in the style of Napoleon crossing the Alps

### BATTLE OF BOYACÁ 03

Bolívar and Francisco de Paula Santander cut off a Spanish advance force near a bridge over the Boyacá River. Around 1,600-1,800 Spanish prisoners are captured before the revolutionaries capture Bogotá. Bolívar is then hailed as the liberator of New Granada.



The revolutionary victory at Boyacá is considered to be the beginning of the end of Spanish rule in the north of South America





**“THE CULMINATION OF THE REVOLUTIONS  
AGAINST SPAIN IS THE CREATION OF A  
LARGE FEDERAL REPUBLIC”**

1820-22

## ECUADORIAN INDEPENDENCE

The revolutionary success in Venezuela and New Granada inspires a similar uprising for independence in the Real Audiencia of Quito, which eventually becomes the Republic of Ecuador. Bolívar sends decisive aid including supplies and the talented Venezuelan general Antonio José de Sucre.



One of the Ecuadorian revolutionaries' first successes is a victory at the Battle of Camino Real, 9 November 1820

1820-26



Argentine revolutionary José de San Martín proclaims the independence of Peru. Although they are rivals, the combined efforts of San Martín and Bolívar's forces secure Peruvian freedom

## PERUVIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Peru is the penultimate redoubt of Spanish rule in South America. Despite various campaigns, a republic is not officially proclaimed until 1821. Bolívar is invited to intervene in the conflict in 1823 and Peru is liberated three years later.

24 June 1821

## BATTLE OF CARABOBO 04

Carabobo virtually frees Venezuela from Spanish control when Bolívar wins a decisive victory west of Caracas with a numerically superior force. British Legions once again prove a decisive factor in the revolutionary success along with “llanero” militias. The battle is the largest engagement of the Venezuelan War of Independence.

24 June is nationally celebrated every year in Venezuela as “Battle of Carabobo Day”







The battle is fought on the lower slopes of Pichincha, an Andean volcano that overlooks Quito

## BATTLE OF PICHINCHA 05

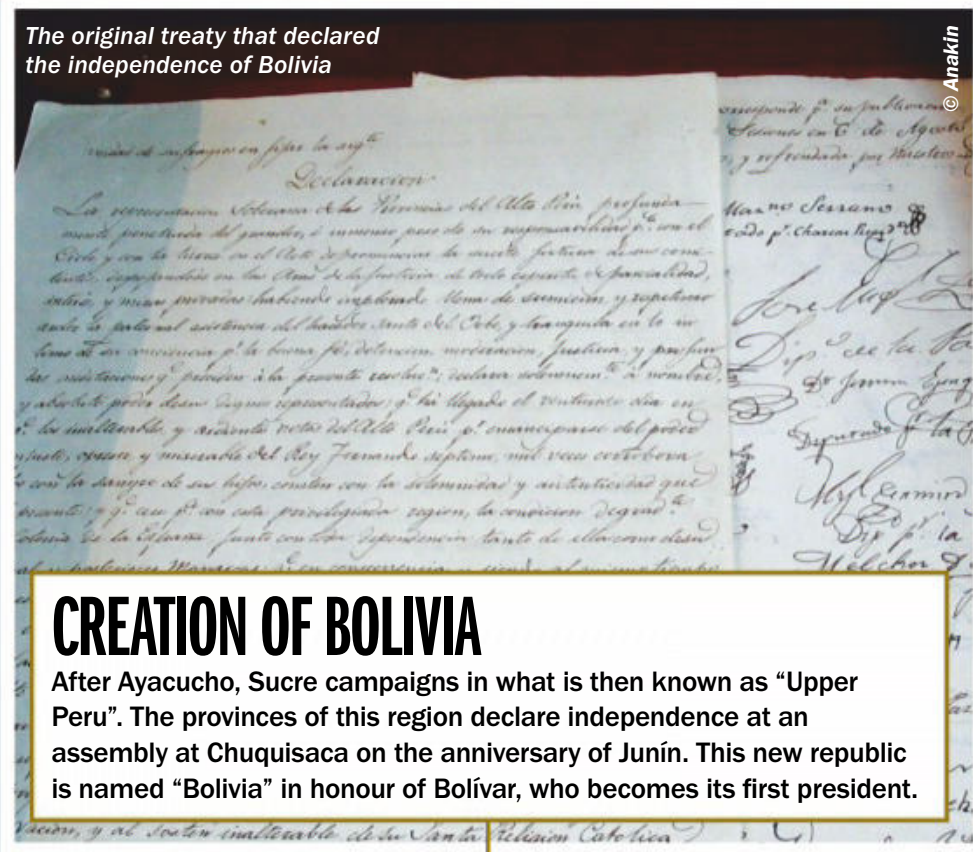
A force from Gran Colombia, Peru, Rio de la Plata and Guayaquil under the command of Sucre defeat Spanish royalists. The victory enables the revolutionaries to occupy Quito and Bolívar is acclaimed as liberator.



The Spanish royalist officers capitulate to Sucre after the battle

## BATTLE OF AYACUCHO 07

Around 5,700-8,500 Venezuelans, Colombians, Argentines and Chileans combine under Sucre to fight a Spanish royalist army on a Peruvian plateau. The Spanish have more men and vast numbers of artillery but large numbers of their officers and troops defect to the revolutionaries before the battle. Peru's freedom is secured and the battle becomes known as the "Waterloo of South America".



The original treaty that declared the independence of Bolivia

## CREATION OF BOLIVIA

After Ayacucho, Sucre campaigns in what is then known as "Upper Peru". The provinces of this region declare independence at an assembly at Chuquisaca on the anniversary of Junín. This new republic is named "Bolivia" in honour of Bolívar, who becomes its first president.

7 September 1821      24 May 1822      6 August 1824      9 December 1824      6 August 1825      1830-31

## BIRTH OF GRAN COLOMBIA

The culmination of the revolutions against Spain is the creation of a large federal republic. Its territory comprises of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and parts of northern Peru, west Guyana and northwest Brazil. Bolívar becomes the country's first president.



Gran Colombia's flag is based on a Venezuelan republican tricolour

## BATTLE OF JUNÍN 06

Junín is the penultimate engagement of the Peruvian War of Independence. Bolívar advances towards Cuzco with a numerically inferior force. Although it is little more than a skirmish, the battle greatly increases the morale of pro-independence fighters.

This exaggerated painting depicts Junín as a much larger battle than the reality. Nevertheless, it is the last engagement personally commanded by Bolívar



## DEMISE OF GRAN COLOMBIA

Despite Bolívar's success, his large state becomes mired in political division. He resigns as president on 27 April 1830 and dies a disappointed man on 17 December after suffering from Tuberculosis. Gran Colombia is then dissolved into the republics of Venezuela, Ecuador and New Granada the following year.

Bolívar plans to leave South America for a European exile but he dies of tuberculosis aged 47 in what is now the Colombian city of Santa Marta



Images: Alamy, Getty





While each side inflicted serious losses on the other, Bolívar's patriots kept their morale until victory was achieved. It helped since at least half the army fought with such ineptitude



## Frontline

# BATTLE OF CARABOBO

With a decisive victory over the Spanish Empire eluding him after so many years, in 1821 Simon Bolívar finally brought his troops and llaneros to the Carabobo plain for a showdown with Gen. Miguel de La Torre's army

**A**lways rising from defeat stronger than before, Simon Bolívar managed to gather an army large enough to march on Caracas, the capital of his homeland. In 1816 he was driven from the city by the Spanish and forced to plead for help wherever he could. The ruler of Haiti's meagre support so heartened Bolívar that he repaid the kindness by emancipating black slaves wherever he went. As a result, the ranks of his army brought together people of different races and creeds. European volunteers were a common sight and even Bolívar had adopted a young Irishman named Daniel O'Leary as his aide-de-camp and confidant.

Joining him in his latest crusade was José Antonio Páez, best described as the llanero commander in charge of the rough riders who terrorised the Spanish with incessant guerrilla warfare. When organised into a coherent body the llaneros were a sight to behold with their lances and machetes. All in all by June 1821 a combined force on foot and horse were carving a path toward the capital. Their total number was modest by the standards of the time, just several thousand strong, but even Spain's expeditionary army under the command of Field Marshal Pablo Morillo, who was responsible for defeating Bolívar six years ago, had no more than 10,000 men.

Field Marshal Morillo had already left Venezuela when Bolívar launched his new campaign, leaving the Spanish forces under the command of General Miguel de La Torre. Besides, Morillo had grown tired of the war and, having chased and sparred with Bolívar for so many years, deemed his nemesis a worthy fellow and a true gentleman. Bolívar and Morillo even met for a conference in a place called Santa Ana and with evening near, they spent the night together in a hut, each with his own hammock. Their company was so agreeable that, upon returning to Madrid in 1820, Morillo had nothing but praise for Bolívar.

The two armies met in a grassy plain west of a great lake on 24 June 1821. To Bolívar's dismay the Spanish caught his marching formations in a ravine and the horsemen under

Páez put on a lackluster effort at flanking the Royalists, whose numbers equaled the patriot army. But it was the so-called British Legion who maintained the greatest composure. With just a handful of companies and led by veteran officers like Colonel Thomas Farrier, their lines unleashed a pitiless fusillade on the Spanish above them. For several hours the exchange sent thunderclaps echoing from the surrounding hills as each side tried to annihilate the other.

The British, who had Europeans, Scotsmen, and Irishmen among them, refused to budge even as their officers were shot and killed, including Farrier and his subordinates.

Unlike previous battles, however, Bolívar kept himself from joining the fight and maintained his command post on a guarded knoll. He did send additional battalions to help the beleaguered Legion. At a single crucial moment, the kind that all important battles seem to have, the bloodied volunteers raced up the slope and met the Spanish at close quarters. Páez and his llaneros did what they could to beat down the enemy, but the sum of their efforts was insignificant. To Páez's dismay, his loyal second, a black horseman who served him his entire life, was shot in the chest and died of blood loss.

The Spanish ranks collapsed at noon and General La Torre evacuated his command. The significance was momentous. A dozen years since a Venezuelan junta tried to establish an independent country – only to fail – Bolívar accomplished the deed. But there was no excessive bloodshed or vengeful massacre that followed for many of those fighting under the Spanish flag were Venezuelans too. They were fellow creoles and colonial subjects whose own loyalties rejected Bolívar's republican vision. Battles were still being fought in Venezuelan territory until 1825 but these were the holdouts resisting Bolívar's newly minted armed forces.

After a triumphant reception in Caracas, whose buildings bore the scars from the 1812 earthquake, Bolívar and his staff did their best at nation building until matters in Peru drove them to fight again. The next few years were spent in campaigns to kick the Spanish out from their last bastions. A year after his victory in Carabobo, Bolívar was in the territory of Ecuador for a conference with the Argentinian war hero Jose de San Martin. The two leaders tried to reconcile competing visions for a unified Latin America under a democratic system but San Martin's doubts coloured his judgment. Nothing came of the meeting and as a result, Chile and Argentina became two separate countries and the same fate befell the territories Bolívar tried to hold together in union.

## THE ENGLISH HELD FAST WITH THE HIGH GROUND CONTROLLED BY THE SPANISH, AN UNDAUNTED LINE OF FUSILIERS WAS ALL THAT STOOD BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT

Although they were described as the "English Legion" the foreign volunteers who marched with Simon Bolívar in 1821 were a small assortment of riflemen whose numbers never exceeded a full battalion. Indeed, the historical record of their conduct of the battle is rich in gallantry and somewhat short on crucial detail. It's possible just about 400 of them were present in Carabobo and they formed a line strong enough to hold the Spanish.

So fierce was their determination that the officers leading them died at a rapid clip, leaving mere lieutenants to command the surviving ranks at the end of the fighting.

But their achievements have enshrined the Legion in Venezuela's history – a regal monument stands in the battle site today and London's ambassadors do lay wreaths on it.

To put their actions in perspective, if the volunteers made a hasty withdrawal at the time of the battle, a stalemate would have ensued and Bolívar risked another defeat, thereby delaying his plans to retake Venezuela.

*Losing nearly half their number, with ranking officers killed where they stood and ammunition spent, Bolívar's foreign volunteers charged the Spanish and fought like madmen*



Images: Alamy, Getty

**“THE EXCHANGE SENT  
THUNDERCLAPS ECHOING  
FROM THE SURROUNDING  
HILLS AS EACH SIDE TRIED  
TO ANNIHILATE THE OTHER”**



# IN THE RANKS

34 years after the United States declared its independence from the British Crown, another revolution swept Latin America to undo 300 years of Spanish colonial rule

**T**he Latin American wars of independence took place between 1810 and 1825. With the Spanish Empire weakened by Napoleon's quest to dominate Europe, the colonies of Venezuela and Nueva Granada were seized by juntas led by idealistic young men. Foremost among them was the well-heeled libertarian Simon Bolívar. He also assembled a diverse host of allies.

## THE VOLUNTEERS

WHETHER TO ESCAPE DIRE POVERTY, OR SEEK OUT GLORY, SCORES OF EUROPEANS TRAVELLED TO JOIN THE BOLIVARIAN CAUSE

The most formidable troops ever led by Simon Bolívar were the members of the 'English Brigade' or sometimes referred to as the 'English Legion'. These were expatriates recruited from Britain and promised generous salaries once they arrived in Venezuela. Of course, the sales pitch never lived up to reality.

Britain in the 1810s was enjoying its post-Napoleonic peace at the expense of so many jobless war veterans. This proved a boon for agents working on behalf of Simon Bolívar who, unbeknownst to their leader, advertised ridiculous benefits for willing mercenaries. This was so effective that a large contingent of hard up Irishmen outnumbered the English and other European recruits.

Once they reached Latin America and the deserters were weeded out, more than a few became ardent patriots, like Daniel Florence O'Leary who earned the rank of cavalry adjutant by the time he was 17. Once assigned as Bolívar's aide-de-camp he served as a secretary and bodyguard to the national hero.

O'Leary's fondness for Latin America dominated his life and his own son Simon Bolívar O'Leary helped publish the best multi-volume memoir on the Latin American wars of independence and the men who fought them.

Left: Bust of Daniel O'Leary

Image: Juanme17

## THE LLANEROS

VENEZUELA'S RUGGED INTERIOR BELONGED TO THE HORSEMEN WHO ROAMED THE LLANOS. AT FIRST INDIFFERENT TO THE REVOLUTION, IN 1819 THEY CONSOLIDATED UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JOSÉ ANTONIO PÁEZ

Once carved into estates and plantations, Spain's overseas territories became net producers of valuable commodities. The Bolívar clan, for example, had vast holdings passed down from generation to generation. As European cattle reached Latin America the climate and geography spurred their unrestricted growth. A new industry emerged in the remote flatlands known as llanos run by Hispanic cowboys who lived on their saddles.

Insular and disdainful of the city-bred aristocrats who were their betters, the llaneros invented a distinct society that extolled horsemanship and raw courage – the kind that drove them to risk life and limb subduing wild horses and cattle. (The same applied to their brethren in the Argentine plains, the fabled gauchos.)

José Antonio Páez was a rare product of the llanos. Although raised in appalling poverty he attained a measure of wealth and sophistication. He rallied his horsemen for the cause when it became clear that Spain was losing its grip on Venezuela.

Fighting on horseback with lances and machetes, the llanero cavalry gave Bolívar a series of rare victories in Venezuela but Páez himself was never willing to allow his men outside their territory. When Gran Colombia fell apart in 1830 and Bolívar perished from tuberculosis soon after, a sorrowful Páez assumed the role of Venezuela's first true president.



## FREED SLAVES

### BLACK SLAVES WERE INDISPENSABLE TO LATIN AMERICAN SOCIETY. BUT IN HIS DESPERATE SEARCH FOR ALLIES, BOLIVAR CHOSE TO ABOLISH THE WICKED INSTITUTION, HOPING FREEMEN WOULD SWELL HIS ARMY'S RANKS

A regrettable omission in the annals of Latin America's fight for independence are the African slaves who joined the rebel armies but were never recognised. It's easy to imagine various 'minorities' casting their lot with the creole juntas in 1810, and this was true for indians and foreign adventurers, but an inconvenient truth was African slaves were commonplace in Latin American society.

Even in Brazil, slaves and mulattoes (locally born subjects of African descent) made up at least half the population and slavery wasn't outlawed until 1888. During his own childhood in Caracas, Simon Bolívar was raised by his African nurse since his mother passed away before he reached puberty.

It was a former slave and revolutionary hero who lent Bolívar crucial moral and material support when no other foreign power would. The first president of Haiti, formerly the plantation

island Saint Dominique, helped Bolívar build a new army that would invade Venezuela. Alexandre Sabès Pétion provided food, weapons, and even a few soldiers for the Bolívarian cause not once, but twice, as Bolívar's attempts failed in quick succession.

To repay this debt, Bolívar swore to free African slaves throughout Latin America, which he did wherever he marched. The year 1816 is remembered by all Venezuelans as the crucial point when their national hero decreed that slavery be abolished. From 1816 onward, no battle or campaign was undertaken without African soldiers participating on the side of the patriots.

Unfortunately, heroes and statesmen of African descent are missing from the countries that Bolívar helped establish, as if their role in the wars for independence were insignificant and minor.

*Africans were enlisted by all sides during the wars of independence. Simon Bolívar's own army did attract many former slaves but history has yet to determine if professional Haitian soldiers – themselves former guerrillas – were under his command too*



## THE NUEVA GRANADANS

### UNABLE TO RAISE ENOUGH TROOPS, BOLIVAR FOUND BETTER PROSPECTS IN THE NEIGHBORING JUNTA THAT TOOK OVER THE CITY OF BOGOTA. THE DASHING FRANCISCO PAULA DE SANTANDER BECAME HIS FINEST GENERAL AND THE FATHER OF COLOMBIA

Once conquered by Spain, the immense territory spanning the northwestern corner of South America became Nueva Granada. With a stratified society dominated by harsh colonial governors, the same yearning for freedom swept its wealthy creoles. When driven from Venezuela by a superior Spanish army, another group of local patriots were willing to assist Bolívar's cause. These young men from Nueva Granada had a serious impact on the wars to come.

Although the Nueva Granadans had their own disagreements, the 20-year-old revolutionary Santander was

an enthusiastic soldier who quickly rose to become Bolívar's second in command in the difficult years between 1816 and 1819. At the time, bereft of money and external support, Bolívar was reduced to leading guerrillas on horseback in Venezuela's remote borderlands. Assisting him, of course, were many young men like Santander who earned their rank through adversity and hardship.

The Nueva Granadans' loyalty to Bolívar was reinforced by the loss of their capital Bogota to an invading Spanish army. Rather than choose exile, the surviving patriots fought tooth and nail for their survival. This did have the detrimental effect of the Nueva Granadans becoming engrossed with extricating the Spanish from their country for good, leaving them uncommitted to other campaigns in Venezuela and Peru. After the victorious Battle of Boyaca on 24 August, 1819, the 27-year-old Santander assumed the role of vice president under Bolívar's regime. The two men were soon at odds and Santander himself was forced into exile by the circumstances that led to Gran Colombia's collapse.

*Having served with distinction in Bolívar's army, José Antonio Páez became Venezuela's first sitting president and clung to power directly and behind the scenes until 1861*

*The Patriot and Spanish armies were evenly matched at Boyaca. The difference was the former's raw courage. Victory allowed Simon Bolívar to begin forming his pet project, Gran Colombia*





# CAUDILLOS OF LATIN AMERICA

The military dictators who populate the continent's history are a colourful yet checkered lot, yet none matched the courage and idealism of Bolívar and many led their countries to ruin. Why?

**A**mong the many honours festooned over his memory, including recognition as a founding father comparable to George Washington, Simon Bolívar stands as the finest example of that rare political creature – the caudillo. Possessed by a vision for a new order, Bolívar used his martial prowess and personal magnetism to impose his will on half a dozen countries. Therein lies the problem, for the numerous uniformed dictators and strongmen who followed in his wake have accomplished little for Latin America in the last 200 years, be they as imperious as Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana from Mexico or iron-fisted as Juan Manuel Rozas from Argentina. While the idea of a caudillo seems trapped in the stiff uniforms and cheap pageantry of a bygone age, the greatest caudillo of them all is a household name in our time – Fidel Castro of Cuba.

Like Bolívar, Castro sought to reshape Latin America and was too fond of centralising power in his hands. Unlike Bolívar, Castro belonged to the 20th century; participated in a terrifying nuclear standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States, and remained Cuba's dictator until his death in 2016. Recall that Bolívar himself grew tired of absolute rule and exited his office to allow the separation of Colombia and Venezuela. (Both countries quickly fell into lesser caudillo rule.) Castro, on the other hand, made Cuba a pariah and left it that way.

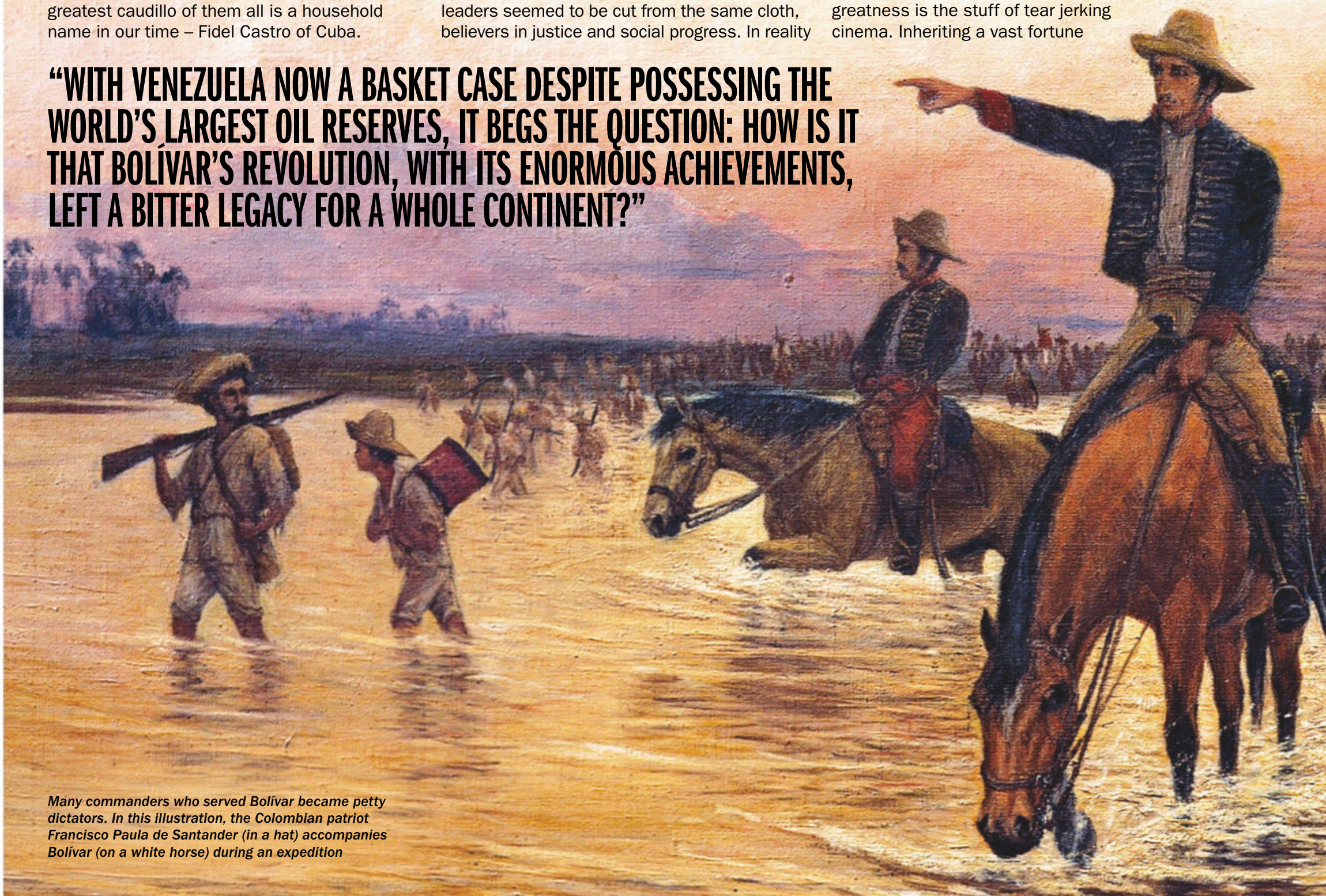
Beyond Cuba's iconic strongman, the caudillo myth has gone full circle and found its way back where it started. For more than a decade Venezuela saw a remarkable transformation under the leadership of Hugo Chavez, an ex-army officer who wanted to use socialism as a means for uplifting Venezuela's poor. In spirit, the two leaders seemed to be cut from the same cloth, believers in justice and social progress. In reality

neither of them achieved their goals. Chavez is responsible for abusing Venezuela's oil wealth and is the architect behind the perpetual economic crisis millions of citizens must live through. He has also proven corruptible, with his cronies in government and local generals propping up the bumbling successor Nicolas Maduro, whose time in office is preserved by riot police, loyalist gangs, and material support from foreign allies such as China and Russia.

With Venezuela now a basket case despite possessing the world's largest oil reserves, it begs the question: how is it that Bolívar's revolution, with its enormous achievements, left a bitter legacy for a whole continent?

Bolívar himself was foremost a romantic figure. No aspect of his life was touched by selfish impulses and calculating mischief. The origin story that led him on the path to greatness is the stuff of tear jerking cinema. Inheriting a vast fortune

**“WITH VENEZUELA NOW A BASKET CASE DESPITE POSSESSING THE WORLD'S LARGEST OIL RESERVES, IT BEGS THE QUESTION: HOW IS IT THAT BOLÍVAR'S REVOLUTION, WITH ITS ENORMOUS ACHIEVEMENTS, LEFT A BITTER LEGACY FOR A WHOLE CONTINENT?”**



Many commanders who served Bolívar became petty dictators. In this illustration, the Colombian patriot Francisco Paula de Santander (in a hat) accompanies Bolívar (on a white horse) during an expedition



while still in his teens, he travelled to Spain in search of a wife. Unfortunately the love of his life Maria Teresa del Toro was stricken by a tropical disease upon arriving in Bolívar's hacienda and perished within a year. Rather than console himself with the thought of finding love anew, the grieving widower travelled Europe for several years seeking adventures. While in Paris his friends arranged an initiation to freemasonry and visiting Rome renewed his enthusiasm for republican government.

When the mighty struggle for Venezuelan independence commenced from 1810 onward Bolívar and his peers knew nothing but defeat. In 1812, the same year a British army took revenge on the United States, an earthquake wrecked Caracas and left its people in abject despair. Compounding their dire straits was a Spanish army marching toward them and the nominal President Francisco de Miranda's unwillingness to lead a patriotic army to defend the capital.

Bolívar's fame spread when he took the initiative to fight small actions against the Spanish but the lack of popular support – common folk preferred the authority of the Spanish monarch and the Catholic Church – forced him to retreat abroad. Rather than exile, Bolívar directed his fledgling independence movement from the coastal city of Cartagena in Nueva Granada. (The country now called Colombia.) Try as he might, he could barely muster enough men nor the full support of a foreign power like Great Britain to aid his cause. His personal correspondence with America's

leading political figures bore little fruit but cemented his reputation as a political thinker.

While Bolívar did have many gifts, be it unfailing generosity or personal charisma, his military record is debatable. He lost more battles than he won, although the latter ones were essential victories that earned him power and fame. His tactician's mind took many strange turns and risks other commanders would prefer to avoid. The forced march over the Andes in 1824, for example, exposed his men to sickness and death but his dragoons did manage to rout the last remaining Spanish army in Junin. Strangely, as much as he loved Venezuela, he never governed it until he assumed leadership over the former Nueva Granada that was renamed Gran Colombia – after Christopher Columbus – whose expanse covered the northern half of the South American landmass. By 1825, when the Spanish were finally defeated, so far-reaching was Bolívar's stature that the lower extremities of Peru were fashioned into a separate country, Bolivia.

Yet these achievements proved unfeasible. Gran Colombia ceased to exist by 1830 and the Republic of Colombia was soon feuding with the Republic of Peru over a contested border while a smaller country between them rose up and became Ecuador. Bolivia itself, sparsely populated by indigenous people, fell victim to its neighbours, losing precious territory until it was reduced to a landlocked state at the heart of the continent. It must be clarified that Brazil was exempted from the Latin American

wars of independence as it had secured its freedom from Portugal years earlier, emerging a newfound empire with awe-inspiring natural resources. Since the very beginning Brazil always stood on its own feet, unchallenged by its neighbours.

When Bolívar succumbed to tuberculosis in a thatched hut on 17 December 1830 he was penniless and held in contempt. The same countries he fought so hard to liberate from Spain had turned against him, offering neither political office nor military command. His ideals vanished with his final breath and these never returned to Latin America. The Colombian General Francisco de Paula Santander assumed the leadership of his country and ruled with fairness, as a result Colombia stands as an unblemished democracy to this day. Elsewhere, caudillos like José Antonio Páez, who once led Bolívar's llanero cavalry, became a national leader too and mangled republicanism with his brand of benevolent dictatorship. Throughout the 19th century no Latin American state escaped caudillo rule, among the worst was Paraguay's Francisco Solano Lopez who launched a doomed war against its neighbours that killed a quarter of his own countrymen.

Perhaps Bolívar's revolution is unfinished and Latin America still awaits another heroic figure to right its many wrongs. For now, it appears the famed Liberator set a shining example for all generations that's so unreachable, it cast a dark shadow over the continent instead.





# REVOLUTIONARIES & ROYALISTS

Bolívar's struggles for South American independence was dominated by colonial noblemen, guerrilla fighters and ineffective Spanish commanders

## SIMÓN BOLÍVAR

1783-1830 "THE GEORGE WASHINGTON OF SOUTH AMERICA"

Born in Caracas, Bolívar was technically one of the elites of colonial Venezuela and his family were wealthy aristocrats of full Spanish descent. As befitting his social rank, Bolívar was educated in Europe where he became steeped in Enlightenment ideals. Ironically, this led him to become a fervent revolutionary and he openly praised the American and French revolutions.

After witnessing the coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte, Bolívar recognised the importance of one man who could change history and vowed to free Venezuela from Spanish rule. Although he was personally courageous, Bolívar's fortunes varied wildly from battlefield victories to defeats and two exiles. Nevertheless, his determination always meant that he bounced back.

From 1816 Bolívar's successes began to increase. With only a few thousand soldiers, many of whom were foreign volunteers, he used daring tactics and strategies to confound his Spanish enemies. Military high points included an audacious crossing of the Andes in 1819 and the battles of Boyacá and Carabobo.

*Such was Bolívar's military and political skill that he has sometimes been referred to as the "George Washington of South America"*

These events secured Venezuelan and New Granadan independence but Bolívar's ambitions extended further.

Now nicknamed "El Libertador" ("The Liberator"), Bolívar established the republic of Gran Colombia, which covered huge swathes of northern South America. As its first president, Bolívar delegated much of the military aspects of fighting the Spanish to his subordinates and aimed to banish colonial rule from the entire continent. With the Argentine revolutionary José de San Martín fighting in the south, Bolívar assembled an army to invade Peru and once again crossed the Andes. He fought and won his last battle at Junín in August 1824 before Antonio José de Sucre completed the campaign at the Battle of Ayacucho.

To celebrate Bolívar's achievements, the new country of Upper Peru was named Bolivia in his honour but the federal states of Gran Colombia split into sovereign republics. Bolívar resigned the presidency in 1830 and died shortly afterwards but his dream to liberate South America had been achieved.

## ANTONIO JOSÉ DE SUCRE

1795-1830 THE TALENTED DEPUTY COMMANDER AND VICTOR OF AYACUCHO

Sucre served as Bolívar's talented lieutenant and was one of the most respected military leaders of the revolutions against Spain. Born in Venezuela of distant aristocratic Flemish descent, he became Bolívar's chief-of-staff in 1820 and was promoted to general.

Sucre was the key liberator of Ecuador and Peru and won several of the most decisive battles. In 1822 he won the Battle of Pichincha outside Quito after marching 3,000 metres above sea level. This victory secured Ecuador's independence but Sucre moved southeast to link up with Bolívar and jointly won the Battle of Junín in 1824.

Bolívar then gave Sucre a free hand in commanding Gran Colombian forces in Peru and his finest hour was at the Battle of Ayacucho in December 1824. This decisive engagement saw the capitulation of royalist forces in Peru and ended Spanish rule in South America.

Sucre became the second president of Bolivia after Bolívar himself in 1825 but he was the new republic's first constitutionally elected head of state. He resigned in 1828 and retired to Ecuador but anti-Bolivarian soldiers assassinated him in 1830.

*As well as his presidency of Bolivia, Sucre was also briefly president of Peru in 1823 in a military capacity*







## MIGUEL DE LA TORRE 1786-1843 THE DEFEATED GENERAL AT CARABOBO

A native of the Basque Country, La Torre joined the Spanish Army as a private at the age of 14 during the War of the Second Coalition. Having joined the Guardia de Corps, he fought with distinction during the Peninsular War and was a colonel by 1814. Assigned to Pablo Morillo's expedition to reconquer New Granada, La Torre was again promoted and remained in South America.

In 1820 La Torre was given command of Spanish forces in Venezuela as well as the staff governing position of captain general. Although he negotiated with Bolívar, La Torre was defeated at Carabobo in June 1821. This battle led to Venezuelan independence but La Torre's career remarkably survived. He was promoted to lieutenant general and became governor of Puerto Rico from 1822-37. La Torre learned from his mistakes and prevented rebellion from developing in Puerto Rico during his tenure. He also helped to supply the few remaining band of royalist fighters in Venezuela before he retired to Madrid.

*Despite being the commander who oversaw the humiliating Spanish defeat at Carabobo, La Torre ended his life as the count of Torrependo*

## JOSÉ DE LA SERNA 1770-1832 THE LAST VICEROY OF PERU

Born in the Andalusian city of Jerez de la Frontera, La Serna joined the Spanish Army at a young age and fought in the Peninsular War. By 1816 he had been promoted to major general and was dispatched to Peru to battle the growing insurgency against Spanish rule.

La Serna initially fought the Argentine forces of José de San Martín and was reduced to conducting a defensive war. Amidst this crisis in colonial Peru, La Serna launched a successful coup against the Spanish viceroy and replaced him in office. His own vicerealty was a notable failure and San Martín's army forced him to abandon Lima in July 1821.

The Spanish government retired to Cuzco but its forces were defeated by Bolívar at Junín in 1824. La Serna resolved to risk everything to crush the revolutionaries and left Cuzco with a disciplined army. Nevertheless, he was defeated by Sucre at the Battle of Ayacucho and Spanish authority collapsed in Peru and South America at large. La Serna himself was wounded and captured but he was soon released and returned to Spain.

*La Serna was the last of a long line of Spanish colonial rulers whose viceroys and governors had dominated Peru since the conquistador Francisco Pizarro*



*Urdaneta once declared to Bolívar, "If two men are sufficient to liberate our homeland, ready am I to follow you"*

## RAFAEL URDANETA 1788-1845 THE LAST PRESIDENT OF GRAN COLOMBIA

Born into a prominent Venezuelan family of Spanish descent, Urdaneta was initially an administrator for the vicerealty of New Granada before he joined the revolutionary Caracas junta in 1810. Urdaneta distinguished himself at the battles of Niquitao and Taguanes and Bolívar quickly recognised his merits. He was the commander at several revolutionary victories including the Battle of Barbula and the Siege of Santa Fe.

Urdaneta's forces liberated the Coro Province in 1821, which set the stage for the decisive victory at Carabobo. After the liberation of Venezuela, he became one of Bolívar's most trusted advisors and was notably loyal. Bolívar nicknamed him "The Brilliant" for his grasp of battlefield strategy and he continually served in governmental military capacities. Urdaneta was so loyal that he served as the last president of Gran Colombia between 1830-31 in the hope that the resigned Bolívar would retake the reins of office. He continued as president even after his friend's death and went on to serve as Venezuela's minister of defence.

## JOSÉ ANTONIO PÁEZ 1790-1873 THE GUERRILLA HORSEMAN TURNED VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT

Páez had humble origins and was of mixed Indigenous American and European descent. A llanero (plains horseman) who started life as a ranch hand, Páez eventually acquired land and cattle before joining the Venezuelan revolutionary movement. As the leader of llaneros militiamen, Páez's horsemen were important guerrilla fighters for Bolívar.

Fighting separately from the main revolutionary forces, the llaneros won an astonishing victory at the Battle of Las Queseras del Medio in April 1819 where 153 of Páez's horsemen defeated 1,200 Spanish cavalrymen. The llaneros also helped to secure the victories at Carabobo and Puerto Cabello.

This operational freedom within the Venezuelan independence movement eventually created problems. Páez rebelled against the authority of Gran Colombia in 1826 and although he quickly reconciled with Bolívar he then led the successful movement for Venezuela's sovereignty. In 1830 Páez declared the country to be independent from Gran Colombia and became the republic's president three times until 1863.

*Páez photographed as president of Venezuela, c.1860. The former revolutionary governed as a dictator and ultimately died in exile in New York*





# HITLER'S VENGEANCE

In the summer of 1944,  
the V-1 flying bomb and  
V-2 rocket unleashed  
a new terror on an  
industrial scale

WORDS MICHAEL JONES





*This V-1 made it  
through air defences  
and fell on London*



**T**he Nazi “vengeance weapon” offensive of 1944-45 aimed to utterly demoralise the British population, particularly in London and the south east (and later the newly liberated Belgian city of Antwerp). Alongside the loss of lives and physical destruction ran a psychological battle between Allied and Nazi propaganda. Did the Führer’s terror tactics lift German morale and demoralise his opponents, even at this late stage of World War II – or do just the opposite?

### The onslaught begins

Just after 4.00am on 13 June 1944 the Royal Observer Corps at Dymchurch in Kent signalled the arrival of an entirely new enemy weapon. From a Martello tower built when Britain faced invasion from Napoleon, and now used as a lookout for anything Hitler might fling across the channel, spotters saw an approaching object spurting red flames from its rear and making a noise like “a Model-T-Ford going up a hill”. It was the V-1 Flying Bomb, the V standing for Vergeltungswaffe: ‘Vengeance weapons’.

During the summer of 1944 several thousand of these missiles would land in southern England, killing nearly 5,500 civilians and causing enormous damage to property. A week after D-Day, when everyone in Britain was hoping the war would soon be over, it shook people’s morale. It was the Blitz of 1940 all over again.

“The bombardment will open like a thunderclap at night,” Field Marshal Keitel, head of the German High Command, enjoined. But in truth the very first attack did not seem particularly terrifying. Ten flying bombs were despatched by Flakregiment 155, the German unit charged with operating the new secret weapons from a launching site in the Pas de Calais. “After months of waiting, the time has come to open fire,” Colonel Max Wachtel told his men. “We approach our task supremely confident in our weapons.” However, five V-1s

**“A WEEK AFTER D-DAY, WHEN EVERYONE IN BRITAIN WAS HOPING THE WAR WOULD SOON BE OVER, IT SHOOK PEOPLE’S MORALE. IT WAS THE BLITZ OF 1940 ALL OVER AGAIN”**

immediately crashed and another disappeared from view. The remaining four were sighted over Dymchurch, flying in the direction of London, but only one later exploded, killing six and injuring nine at Bethnal Green in the East End.

“The initial launch was a flop,” Hitler’s Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below admitted. “At the very last moment Army High Command brought forward the operation by two days and this interfered with the timetable for completing the heavy prefabricated launching ramps.” It was not an auspicious beginning for Hitler’s terror campaign.

But two days later the attacks began in earnest, with some 240 V-1s despatched across the channel. On 16 June Croydon resident Herbert Hartwell gave one of the first eye-witness accounts of the flying bombs, “The sirens sounded. Guns kept firing then stopped after about one minute. I looked out of the back-door and saw two planes caught in the searchlights. They were moving at a terrific speed. Red markers and tracers went up and a yellow flash in the sky showed that a plane was hit. At around 2.00pm another plane came ever so low and when he had gone over his engine shut off. About eight seconds later there was a

loud explosion. Afterwards we heard that these were pilotless planes which exploded five to 15 seconds after the engine stopped and the light at the back went out. The plane we heard came down in Warminster Road.”

The borough engineer reported, “Explosion at the back of 64 Warminster Road. This house and no. 62 wrecked, no. 66 partially wrecked and unstable, no. 68 badly damaged. Blast damage was extensive over a radius of 400 yards.” The engineer described the assailants as “pilotless aircraft” (PAC) – they would soon become known as “flying bombs”, or popularly “doodlebugs”.

Each flying bomb contained about a ton of explosives, travelling at speeds of up to 400mph and a height of around 3,000 feet. It had a jet engine and could travel for a distance of up to 160 miles. Its range was determined by a small pre-set propeller which caused it to dive after a given number of rotations. It was a weapon particularly destructive of property as it did not cause a big crater like a conventional bomb but exploded on the surface, creating a tremendous blast.

### Initial reactions

Edward Stebbing was a hospital worker in Potters Bar. “Talk about the pilotless planes is almost endless,” he confided to his diary on 19 June 1944. “It seems they travel at a great speed and at a low height, too low for our radar defence systems and anti-aircraft guns. One man commented that the Germans seemed to have a great store of them ... another person said they came over 50 at a time and the trouble was ‘they [the British government] can’t do anything to deal with them’. The question uppermost in people’s minds is whether we will be able to find an answer to the pilotless planes ... I must admit, these things have put my nerves on edge more than ordinary air raids. I suppose the novelty of them, the devilish ingenuity, has something to do with it. We look up at the sky with a mixture of fear and curiosity.”



## HITLER'S VENGEANCE

*A V-1 flying bomb and launch ramp, Eperlecques bunker complex, France*



*Aerial view of the damage from a V2 rocket which exploded in East Ham, London*



*Civil Defence rescue workers search for survivors under a huge pile of rubble and timbers following a V1 attack*



*An elderly man inspects the front paw of his dog, injured following a devastating V1 attack*

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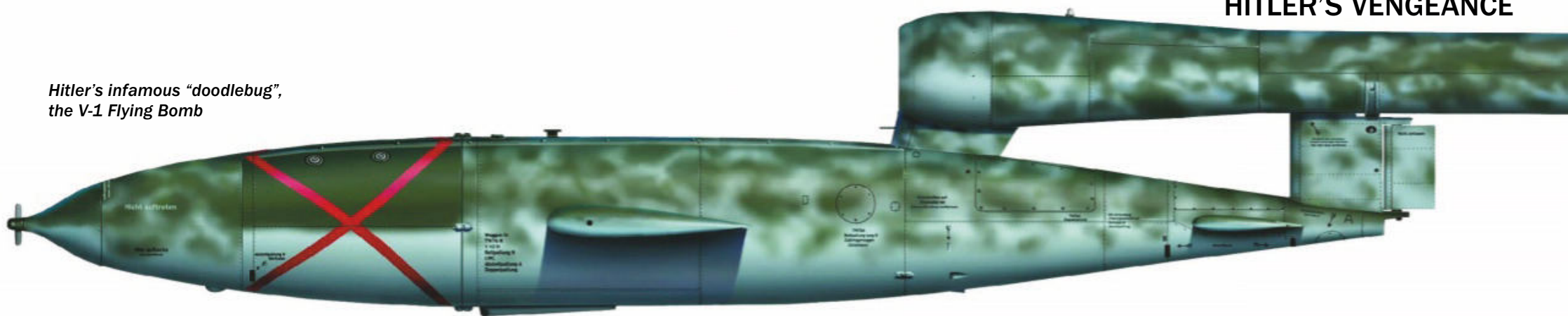
**“THE EFFECT IS FAR STRONGER THAN THE AUTUMN OF 1940 – AND ENGLISH DEFENSIVE MEASURES SO FAR HAVE PROVED FUTILE ... THE SKY ABOVE THE BRITISH CAPITAL IS BLOOD-RED, WITH HUGE CLOUDS OF SMOKE FROM THE TARGETS HIT”**

**Joseph Goebbels**

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Hitler's infamous "doodlebug",  
the V-1 Flying Bomb



"It is the noise I remember best," said Cyril Oakley of Gravesend. "The distant hum, getting louder and louder, growing into a roar and then a deafening rattle as it passed overhead. It was a strangely menacing sound," added Richard Barham, "once heard never forgotten, but difficult to describe, a sort of stuttering, rattling, deep-throated growl." Londoners heard the sound of the flying bomb's engine, followed by the terrifying moment when it stopped. The 15-second pause, described by many as "a deafening silence" was perhaps the hardest to bear. Then would come the explosion, with a cloud of rubble and dust thrown into the air.

The German Armed Forces bulletin was simple and to the point, "Last night and this morning, south England and the regions around London were struck with new explosives of the heaviest calibre." Soldier and ardent Nazi Wilhelm Prüller wrote happily in his diary, "To judge from today's Wehrmacht news, the 'revenge' ('vergeltung') has begun by now." Indeed, the Führer's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels was jubilant, "Destructive fire is raining down on London ceaselessly," he announced. "The effect is far stronger than the autumn of 1940 – and English defensive measures so far have proved futile ... The sky above the British capital is

blood-red, with huge clouds of smoke from the targets hit."

However German civilian Friedrich Kellner, from the provincial town of Laubach, was more cautious, "Propaganda has spoken – but now we wait for the real impact of the 'miracle weapons'," he noted. "Apparently, it concerns a flying bomb or air torpedo, undoubtedly causing destruction – completely indiscriminately. Whether its power is greater than concentrated bombing raids I am unsure." With the D-Day landings two weeks old, and a Red Army attack imminent on the Eastern Front, Kellner sounded a warning note, "All attention is on England and no-one thinks of the Soviet Union. Where is the 'miracle weapon' against the Russians? As their offensive draws closer, it will not help Germany a great deal to go hunting with explosives across the English Channel."

### The development of the V-1

The project had taken several years to develop. On 28 May 1942 Field Marshal Erhard Milch, deputy commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe,

met with aircraft designer Robert Lusser and outlined his plans for a pilotless missile. The Luftwaffe, forced onto the defensive after the Battle of Britain and Allied bombing of German cities, was looking to regain prestige by developing a new weapon. Lusser's design was practical and appealing. The plane would be made of thin steel plate (making no demand on the hard-pressed aluminium industry) and would burn low-grade petrol instead of scarce and costly high-octane aviation spirit. Labour requirements would not be too demanding (about 550 man hours, excluding the explosive and autopilot). The contract was given to the manufacturing company Fieseler, already makers of the Storch high-wing monoplane, less than two months later on 19 July. They were instructed that the flying bomb would carry a warhead of around 200lbs and would be driven by a pulse jet engine. The project was codenamed Kirschkern ('Cherrystone').

On Christmas Eve 1942 the first V-1 was launched from the missile base of Peenemünde, on the island of Usedom just off the Baltic coast, followed by a series of further tests early the following year. The early results were disappointing. The missile went out of control when subjected to a cross wind and

A launching site for V-2  
rockets in Germany





HITLER’S VENGEANCE

numerous crashes were caused by errors in the design. But by May 1943 sustained flights were achieved, with one flying bomb covering a distance of 152 miles and another reaching a speed of 375mph. And now Hitler took an interest in proceedings. Faced by a devastating series of raids on Hamburg, beginning on 24 July 1943, the Führer demanded retaliation. “The only thing that will have any effect is a systematic attack on Britain’s own towns and villages,” he stated. “You can only smash terror with counter terror.” Flakregiment 155 was established – responsible for the actual launches in northern France. The flying bomb was now designated a vengeance weapon.

The British government had long feared such an onslaught. A War Office memo of 13 February 1943 warned, “There have recently been indications that the Germans may be developing some form of long-range projectors, capable of firing on this country from the French coast.” Two months later Prime Minister Winston Churchill appointed Duncan Sandys (who had been commander of Britain’s first experimental anti-aircraft rocket unit) to investigate German long-range rocket development.

On 27 June 1943 Sandys reported to the War Cabinet on the missile site at Peenemunde, saying that the development of jet-propelled planes was probably proceeding there, side by side with the work on rockets (the future V-2). He advised that the site be destroyed by a bombing raid as soon as possible.

On 17 August 1943, 596 bombers carrying 1,650 tons of high explosives attacked Peenemunde. There were direct hits on the assembly buildings where the V-2 rocket was

about to be produced, setting back the project several months. Test firing of rockets was moved to Poland and mass production to underground caves. However, the airfield at Peenemunde West, where the flying bomb tests were being carried out, did not receive a single hit. By the end of November the British government was warned that the most imminent threat was not a rocket but a flying bomb. Storage buildings and earth ramps were sprouting up over northern France. Each site had the capacity for 20 flying bombs. By early 1944 nearly a hundred sites had been identified, some hidden in woodland, where the trees gave them perfect cover. American Fortresses began bombing them – but the results were disappointing. The Germans were completing new sites faster than the Allies could destroy them.

On 26 April 1944 British police, wardens and members of the Royal Observation Corps were given instructions – gleaned from the latest intelligence – on the impending V-1 onslaught. They were told, “The pilotless aircraft is believed to resemble a small monoplane, having a wing span of about 20 feet and an overall length of about 18 feet. No pilot’s cockpit will be visible. The aircraft will be jet-propelled and consequently no propeller will be fitted.” At around the same time, Hitler grimly ordered, “The long-range bombardment of England will commence in the middle of June – London will be the main target.” Now that bombardment had begun.

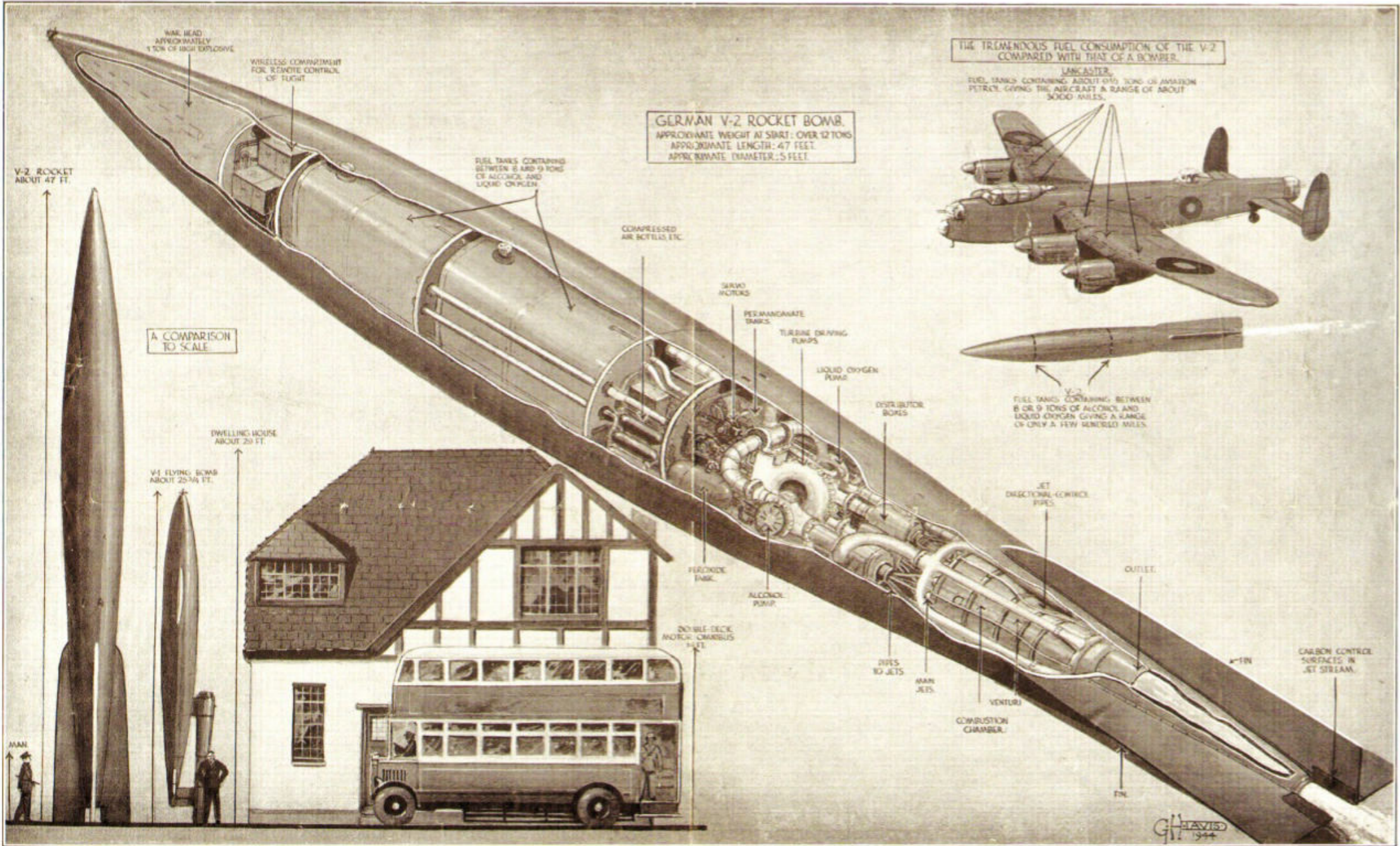
The British response

The campaign saw many terrible incidents. The Guards’ chapel at Wellington Barracks was

struck by a V-1 during a special Sunday morning service, killing 119 of the congregation. On 28 June the Air Ministry on the Strand received a direct hit, with the loss of 198 lives. Defence measures were hurriedly put in place. At the end of the month Winston Churchill visited the anti-aircraft batteries that had been moved along the south coast. Barrage balloons went up around London while Fighter Command deployed specially adapted Tempests, Spitfires and Mustangs to shoot down those flying bombs that got through the gun belt (Operation Crossbow). The British government was initially reluctant to divulge information on the V-1 assault, fearing it would only help the German propaganda machine, but Home Secretary Herbert Morrison warned the War Cabinet that the erosion of public morale by the constant rounds of rumour and speculation was now a far greater worry.

On 6 July 1944 Churchill took a remarkable step. He made a candid statement on the flying bomb menace to the House of Commons. “The invisible battle has now crashed into the open,” the prime minister said. “Between 100 and 150 flying bombs, each weighing about one ton, are being discharged daily – and have been so for the last fortnight or so ... A very high proportion of the casualties have fallen upon London, which presents to the enemy a target 18 miles wide by 20 miles deep. The flying bomb is a weapon literally and essentially indiscriminate in its nature, purpose and effect.”

Below: A 1944 Illustrated London News front page showing illustration of V-2 rocket launches







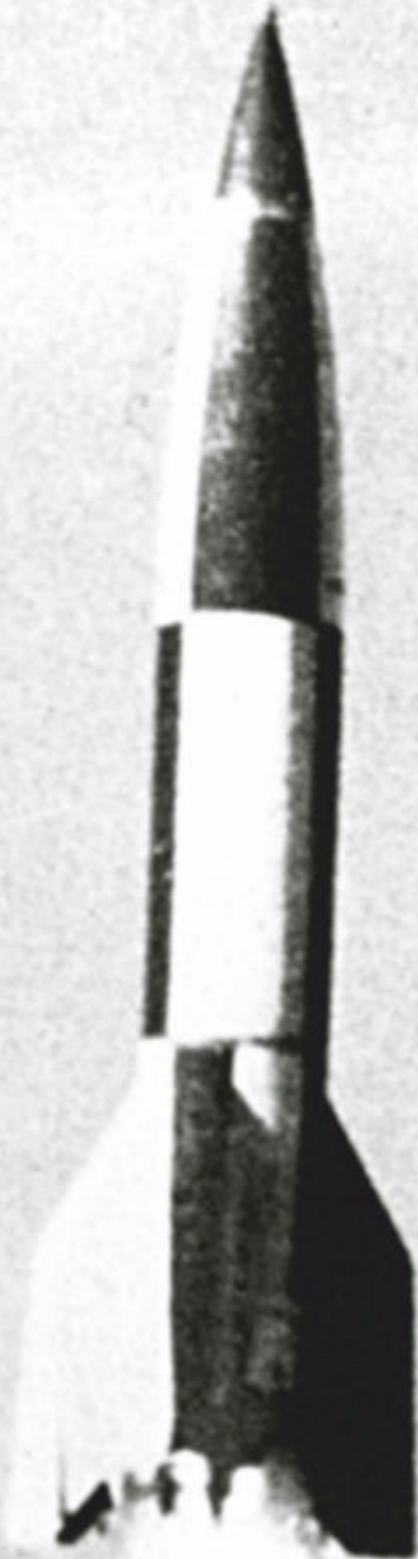
**“CHURCHILL’S STATEMENT  
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WERE INCLINED TO BELITTLE  
THEIR IMPORTANCE”**

**Edward Stebbing**



*Launching a V-2  
rocket. More  
elaborate than the  
V-1, these were first  
fired against London  
on 8 September 1944*

*A Royal Air Force  
Supermarine  
Spitfire manoeuvres  
alongside a German  
V-1 flying bomb in an  
attempt to deflect it  
from its target*





## HITLER'S VENGEANCE

*An elderly man sits on the pile of rubble which was once his home, following a V-1 strike in the Highland Road and Lunham Road area of Upper Norwood, London, July 1944*



*A nose view of a V-1 flying bomb on its launching platform*




He discussed the measures put in place to combat the threat, whilst emphasising that the main military push against Hitler in France would not be diverted. And he concluded, "London will never be conquered and we will never fail."

It was a brave course of action – and absolutely the right one in the circumstances. For many, the dose of realism was welcome. "Churchill's statement on the flying bombs has modified the ideas of both those who were prone to exaggerate and those who were inclined to belittle their importance," noted Edward Stebbing in his diary. The V-1 onslaught continued and the death toll mounted. Londoner Lylie Eldergill wrote to a friend in America, "I do hope it will soon be ended. My nerves can't take much more." But a mood of defiance was once more taking root. The success of fighter squadrons in shooting down "doodlebugs" was avidly followed, alongside such individual exploits as one pilot getting close enough to a V-1 to tip its wings, throwing it off course. Of 6,725 flying bombs launched at England, 4,261 were destroyed before they reached their target. A Home Office official recorded, "Strain, weariness, fear and despondency are all present – many think that these raids are worse than the Blitz, but there is also a growing realisation that they will make no difference to the outcome of the war."

In Germany, things were rather different. Internal Nazi Party reports warned, "Hopes of a devastating retaliatory counter-attack are


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**"STRAIN, WEARINESS, FEAR  
AND DESPONDENCY ARE ALL  
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receding. People are concerned about the lack of visual evidence to support claims of massive destruction to British cities. And they complain that there is no evidence of a lessening of the Allied bombing campaign – which they were told would be a result of unleashing the vengeance weapons. If anything, the opposite seems to be the case." The German media was told to tone down its coverage. 'Mass destruction' became 'storungsfeuer' – 'disruptive fire'.

The V-1 was a weapon that lacked the accuracy to be used in any meaningful military capacity. It could not be launched against the Allied beachheads in France or supply depots on the south coast, which elicited an angry reaction from Wehrmacht commanders in Normandy. "The V-1 undoubtedly caused heavy damage in the British capital," Nicolaus von Below noted. "But when our field marshals demanded that the V-1 be used against Allied landing places they were told it was not possible because the flying bomb could not be aimed at a specific target." The reaction to this news, in Below's words, was "thoroughly unpleasant".

German soldiers on the ground wanted more planes not flying bombs. Canadian Tempest pilot Leslie Moore was briefly taken prisoner in Normandy and reported on his captors' questioning (on 21 July 1944), "The interrogating officer was particularly interested in the effects of the flying bomb but observed that fighter aircraft would have been of far more service to his troops." By the time of Churchill's speech their air force in the west was outnumbered 15:1, and the picture in the east, where the Red Army had unleashed Operation Bagration against a depleted Army Group Centre, was little better.

In private, Goebbels confided to his diary, "The enemy have achieved victory over the Luftwaffe. It is just too depressing and humiliating ... You can well imagine what effect this is having on the German people, because it cannot be hidden from them."





Firemen of the NFS carrying stunned children from shattered homes and shelters following a V-1 attack

## HITLER'S VENGEANCE

Friedrich Kellner wrote of the flying bomb offensive, “The V-1, our new miracle weapon, will apparently be used with ‘cumulative effect’. But after the high rapture, cold water comes rushing in. The people are now told not to exaggerate their hopes.” He continued, “Meanwhile German troops on all fronts are too weak to defend themselves effectively. The army’s situation is extremely bad, particularly in the east. The initiative is fully and wholly in the hands of our enemies.” He concluded with a joke doing the rounds, “The ‘V’ in V-1 actually stands for ‘Verzeiflung’ [‘desperation’].”

As Allied troops pushed eastwards, the flying bomb launching sites were overrun. But on Friday 8 September the first V-2 rocket – with a range of around 200 miles – landed in Chiswick. Under the leadership of Werner von Braun, a most remarkable weapon had been perfected. It reached a maximum speed of 3,548 mph, weighed 13 tons and also carried a one-ton warhead, but unlike its predecessor it gave no warning. And there was simply no defence – it came down suddenly, with no sound. For a while, the British government resorted to the pretence of a series of gas explosions. Eventually, Churchill once more addressed the nation, “Because of its high speed, no sufficient warning can under present circumstances be given ... it is another attempt by the enemy to attack the morale of our civilian population.”

Air Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert later wrote, “Our retaliation against this enormously fast weapon was to attack its launching areas and

bomb its supply depots. There was nothing more we could do.” But by the time the first rocket had been fired Paris had been liberated and two of the rocket assembly plants, at Watten and Wizernes in the Pas de Calais, had been overrun. Wizernes was the world’s largest bunker – over 130,000 tons of concrete went into its construction. Allied bombing could only inflict minor damage on its vast walls.

The launch of the V-2 should have been a coup for Joseph Goebbels. But in early September 1944 the weekly opinion reports submitted to his ministry indicated that the mood of the German population had reached its lowest recorded point. Negative attitudes, “concealed criticism” of the leadership and defeatist comments were on the rise. Morale was so low that Goebbels took the extraordinary decision to black the news of the first V-2 rocket attack on London, rather than risk frittering away its propaganda value. The much-vaunted “retaliation campaign” had come too late.

In England the last V-1 struck Datchworth in Hertfordshire on 29 March 1945, but the attack of the vengeance weapons continued. Antwerp was on the receiving end of V-1 and V-2 attacks from early October 1944. Hitler was desperate to deny the Allies use of the port. By the end of the month more than 150 flying bombs and 100 rockets had pounded the city.

On 27 November a V-2 landed directly on Terniers Square just as a military convoy was crossing the square – 157 people lost their lives. On 16 December – the day the German

Ardennes offensive began – a rocket landed on top of the Rex Cinema, which was packed to capacity, 567 were killed, of which 296 were Allied servicemen and women. By the end of the vengeance campaign, in March 1945, Antwerp had been struck by 2,248 V-1s and 1,712 V-2s.

Hitler’s vengeance weapons were a remarkable technological achievement. The V-1 would prove to be the forerunner of the cruise missile – and the V-2 a pioneer of the space exploration programme. If they had been introduced into the war earlier, and developed greater accuracy, they might have influenced its outcome. But for all the suffering they caused, they appeared too late to make a difference, either in material terms or to the morale of the German people. The British and the Belgians soldiered on with remarkable fortitude and resilience. Albert Speer, the Führer’s Armaments Minister said simply, “Hitler – and all of us – hoped the new weapon [the V-1] would sow horror, confusion and paralysis in the enemy camp. We far overestimated its effect.”

### FURTHER READING

✦ Stephen Zaluga and Jim Laurier, *V-1 Flying Bomb* (Osprey, 2005)

✦ Bob Ogley, *Doodlebugs and Rockets: the Battle of the Flying Bombs* (Froglets Publications, 1992)

✦ Peter Smith, *Air-Launched Doodlebugs, Hitler’s V-1 Missiles* (Pen and Sword, 2006)



# NAZI ROCKET BUNKERS

Hitler ordered the construction of a series of massive reinforced concrete bunkers from where wave after wave of missiles could be launched against their targets – the age of the ballistic missile had dawned

**I**n 1942 RAF Bomber Command's first 1,000 bomber-raid against Cologne devastated the city, causing horrific destruction. Hitler demanded revenge, but the Luftwaffe was outmatched and overstretched. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect-cum-armaments minister, proposed a solution – the world's first ever long-range ballistic missile offensive. At the Peenemunde research facility on the Baltic coast, Walter Dornberger and Wernher von Braun had already built and tested a rocket – the Aggregat 4 – the world would come to know it as the V-2. Desperate to maintain morale at home, Hitler authorised mass production of the new wunderwaffe (wonder weapon), and thousands of slave-labourers were put to work at Mittelwerk in Thuringia building them.

## Concrete megaliths

The question for the Germans was how to shield the rockets from Allied bombing. While some advocated mobile launching, Hitler preferred to replicate the reinforced concrete U-boat pens built on France's Atlantic coast. The führer believed that this was the best way to protect the V-2s while they flattened London.

A suitable site was found near the Eperlecques bunker complex in the Pas-de-

Calais, just east of the village of Watten, and 6,000 forced labourers took part in the construction in early 1943.

The bunker would be huge. The main liquid oxygen (LOX) production facility that fuelled the rockets, would be 92 metres wide, 28 metres high, and descend six metres below ground. Its reinforced concrete roof was five metres thick, and all together some 200,000 tons of concrete and 20,000 tons of steel were needed. Within it would live and work 250 personnel capable of assembling, fuelling, arming and launching 36 missiles a day.

## Allied intelligence and airpower intervene

Unfortunately for the Nazis, as early as November 1939 Allied intelligence began to pick up information about "secret weapons development", and Peenemunde was identified by aerial reconnaissance in January 1943. Operation Hydra was launched – a 600 aircraft RAF raid during the night of 17/18 August 1943, which killed almost 200 staff including technicians and scientists, and severely delayed rocket testing.

Despite the opposition of some – including the RAF's Arthur Harris who thought such raids were an unnecessary diversion from the destruction of

Nazi Germany's industries and cities – Churchill pushed ahead, and Hydra became the first attack of Operation Crossbow – the Allies' plan to search out and destroy the V-weapon threat.

## Operation Crossbow

Beginning in August 1943, Crossbow air raids repeatedly hit Watten and another suspected V-2 site at Mimoyecques. Over 500 tons of bombs were dropped on Watten alone between January and June 1944, and while none managed to penetrate the concrete roof, the damage to the site was so complete that the idea of using it as the main V-2 launching base was abandoned.

An alternate location was found less than nine miles away in a limestone quarry at Wizernes. Some 1,400 workers – including almost 600 Soviet POWs and French labourers beavered away on the site – but it was quickly identified by Allied overflights and repeatedly bombed.

Eventually it was decided to use Barnes Wallis's 12,000 lbs Tallboy 'earthquake' bombs to finally destroy the sites at Watten, Wizernes and Mimoyecques. The elite crews of the RAF's 617 Squadron of Dambuster fame were brought in – the results speak for themselves – not a single rocket of any type was launched from either Watten or Wizernes.



**“WITH WALLS OVER FIVE METRES THICK, MUCH OF THE BUNKER IS STILL STANDING AND VISITORS CAN EXPLORE ITS VAST NETWORK OF UNDERGROUND TUNNELS”**

# EXPLORE FRANCE'S ROCKET BUNKERS

PAS-DE-CALAIS, NORTHERN FRANCE, IS HOME TO TWO INCREDIBLE – AND HAUNTING – REMNANTS OF THE NAZI REGIME'S VENGEANCE CAMPAIGN

*An aerial view of the rocket bunker complex at Wizernes. Known today as 'La Coupole' – 'the Dome'*

Located a few miles from the commune of Saint Omer in northern France, La Coupole is an immense concrete bunker designed by the Nazis to store and launch V-2 rockets against the UK. Countless slave-labourers under Organisation Todt painstakingly built both its protective concrete dome roof and sprawling underground facilities, from 1943.

In July 1944, a Bomber Command raid successfully forced the Nazis to abandon the bunker, after heavy Tallboy bombs blew apart one of the entrances to its launch tunnels. The immense damage of the Allied raid can still be seen today, with the entrance's concrete frame still lying crippled, and the concrete roots of the main dome jutting out of the cliff face – blown open by bomb blasts.

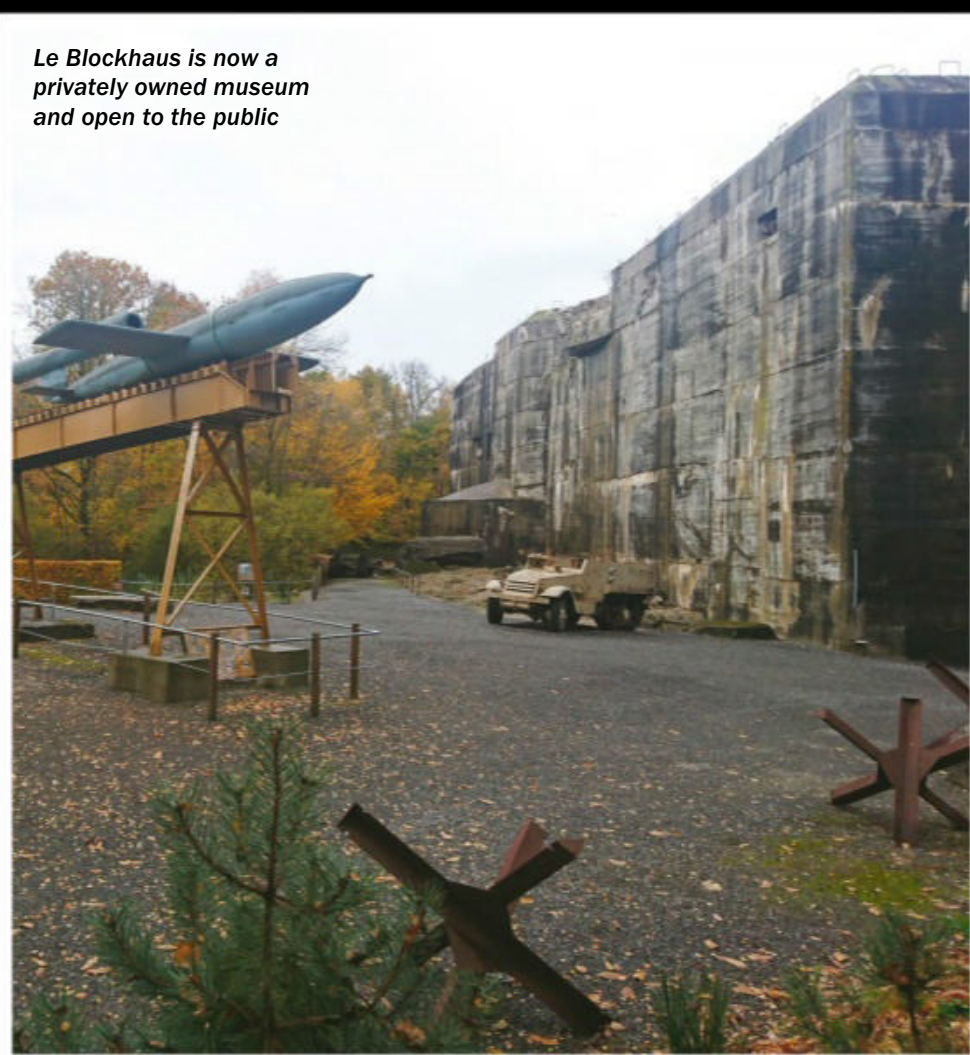
However, with walls over five metres thick, much of the bunker is still standing and visitors can explore its vast network of underground tunnels. Today, La Coupole is a museum to educate future generations and to commemorate the many prisoners

who were murdered and tortured during its construction.

Not far away, in the forest of Eperlecques, lies another monstrous remnant of the Nazi vengeance campaign. Le Blockhaus was built in 1943 and if completed would have been capable of launching up to 20-36 rockets a day. This facility was also intended to construct its own rockets and produce liquid oxygen, making the operation of assembling and launching the V-2s more efficient.

Like La Coupole, the Eperlecques facility was put out of action by Allied bombing in 1943, preventing what would have been an unrelenting barrage of rockets on the British capital. When the Allies liberated the area in September 1944, they found the bomb-scarred bunker surrounded by building materials and scaffolding to repair the damage. Many of these construction materials are still scattered around the site today. Le Blockhaus is also open to the public and is an Historic Monument.

*Le Blockhaus is now a privately owned museum and open to the public*



*Images: Alamy*

For more information visit [www.france.fr](http://www.france.fr) and [www.lacoupole-france.co.uk](http://www.lacoupole-france.co.uk)



# INSIDE A V-2

## MISSILE CONTROL & GUIDANCE

The LEV-3 guidance system consisted of two free gyroscopes to determine direction, and an accelerometer to control engine cut-off for flying distance.

## OXYDATOR TANK

The tanks held 5,553 kilograms (12,242 lbs) of liquid oxygen (LOX) (A-Stoff) as the oxidizer. The tanks themselves were made of an aluminium-magnesium alloy.

## STABILISING FIN

There were four external rudders on the tail fins, with Fin 1 aligned to the target azimuth.

## WARHEAD

Weighing 975 kilograms (2,150 lbs) and containing 910 kilograms (2,010 lbs) of amatol 60/40 high-explosive, detonated by an electric contact fuse, and protected by a fibreglass casing.

## FUEL TANK

The tanks held a 74 per cent ethanol/water mixture (B-Stoff) with 4,173 kilograms (9,200 lbs) of ethyl alcohol which required the distillation of 30 tons of potatoes to produce.

## ENGINE

With a thrust of 25 metric tons (56,000 lbs), the V-2 engine enabled the rocket to achieve a speed of 5,760 km/h (3,580 mph).

# VENGEANCE WEAPONS IN NUMBERS

8

13 June 1944 First V-1 launched at London, impacted next to the railway bridge on Grove Road in Mile End, killing eight civilians

V-1 (THE FZG.76 MISSILE)

33,000

Approximately 33,000 V-1s were built, with some 9,521 fired at London and south east England, at a peak of over 100 per day

4,261

were destroyed by fighters, anti-aircraft fire and barrage balloons

Some 2,419 reached London, killing 6,184 people and injuring

17,981

V-2 (THE A-4 ROCKET)

Their top speed was up to 3,600 mph – with 1,402 aimed at England

3,200

V-2s were fired (of approximately 6,000 built)

V-2s killed 2,754 people and injured another 6,523

V-1 and V-2 attacks on Antwerp left 1,736 dead and 4,500 wounded

Antwerp was attacked by 1,610 missiles

The last V-2 to hit England landed at the end of March 1945, killing Ivy Millichamp (34) in her home in Kynaston Road, Orpington, Kent





# QUICK-BUILD



1	9.12	11.23
22.48	2,182	571
925	771	9,723

1 x Rolls Royce Merlin II V12



1	9.83	11.28
21.83	3,465	703
2,755	978	12,800

1 x Packard V-1650-7 liquid-cooled supercharged V-12



J6045 D-DAY Spitfire



J6046 D-Day P-51D Mustang™

## D-Day Aircraft FIGHTER PLANES OF THE NORMANDY INVASION

*"You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you..."*  
—Eisenhower, Letter to Allied Forces

Operation Overlord, commonly known as D-Day, was launched on 6 June 1944 with the Normandy landings. A 1,200-plane airborne assault preceded an amphibious assault involving more than 5,000 vessels. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel on 6 June, and more than two million Allied troops were in France by the end of August.

P-51D Mustangs™ and Supermarine Spitfires were among the D-Day aircraft which provided air cover for the massive invasion, strafing strongholds and fighting off German bombers. As recreated on our Quickbuild models, the allies painted the plane's wings with stripes to ensure the Allied aircraft were not targeted by friendly-fire in all the chaos of war. This was kept secret and only revealed to the troops who would take part just days ahead of the first waves.

You can create your very own fighters of the RAF at home with an Airfix QuickBuild kit. QuickBuild kits allow you to recreate a wide variety of iconic aircraft, tanks and cars into brilliant scale models. No paint or glue is required, the push together brick system results in a realistic, scale model that is compatible with other plastic brick brands.

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# THE UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR ALASTAIR MACKENZIE (LIEUTENANT COLONEL, RETD.)

This British-New Zealand officer discusses his remarkable military career  
serving in four armies and fighting in Vietnam and Northern Ireland

WORDS TOM GARNER



*Mackenzie  
pictured on  
operations  
in Vietnam*



**S**oldiers have been deployed to conflicts across the world across the centuries and many have fought in several wars during their service. Most remain tied to one army for their careers but Alastair MacKenzie chose a different path. Now a retired lieutenant colonel, MacKenzie was commissioned into the New Zealand Army in the 1960s but went on to fight for Britain, South Africa and Oman, including in the British Parachute Regiment and SAS.

A veteran of several conflicts, MacKenzie is one of the few men to have fought at the sharp end of both the Vietnam War and the Troubles of Northern Ireland. The following is his unique story of brutal combat, covert operations and the complex realities of modern warfare.

### Officer training

Born to a Scottish family in Britain in 1948, MacKenzie's father was also a career soldier and WWII veteran. After many global postings, the family eventually settled in New Zealand but despite his father's experience MacKenzie initially considered a different career to soldiering, "Interestingly enough, I wanted to be

a veterinary surgeon. I didn't get the funds to go to university at the time but I'd been heavily involved in school cadets at Wellington College so that path seemed to beckon."

MacKenzie enlisted in the New Zealand Army in 1966 and served as a private soldier for a year in order to be selected as an officer. He recalls that this was a useful time, "The private soldier training was tough but the good thing was that later on you could see two sides of every decision that was made. Once you'd been at the bottom of the pile and had decisions made for you, I had a fair idea of what decisions were as an officer."

His training was also dangerous and he was almost killed while patrolling on a rubber plantation in Malaya, "We were travelling at night and I suddenly fell into the earth. Luckily, my rifle was across my chest and that blocked me from dropping about 20 feet. I was pulled out of the hole and then we peered down with torches. I assume it was a dried up well and at the bottom there were 20-30 writhing snakes of various denominations, which would not have been a nice way to go! It was horrific peering down and I had a couple of sleepless nights after that."

After completing his training and receiving his commission, MacKenzie was promoted to lieutenant in the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. After a spell of service in Singapore, he was deployed for a year's tour of the fiercest conflict of the time – Vietnam.

### Jungle fighting

MacKenzie commanded a patrol company in Vietnam between 8 May 1970 and 8 May 1971. His regiment was attached to 1st Australian Task Force, which was based at Nui Dat, approximately 60 miles from Saigon in the Phuoc Tuy Province. The New Zealander infantry were tasked with "search and destroy" missions against the Viet Cong (VC) and as the commander of 3 Platoon, Victor 5 Company; MacKenzie's men were attached to 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

He was undeterred by the jungle environment, "I'd grown up in Singapore as a boy and then we trained in Malaya before going to Vietnam so the jungle was our friend really. The difference was that there was someone in there trying to kill you but it was a transition that we were all looking forward to. The New

**"THE PRIVATE SOLDIER TRAINING WAS TOUGH BUT THE GOOD THING WAS THAT LATER ON YOU COULD SEE TWO SIDES OF EVERY DECISION THAT WAS MADE"**



Self-propelled armoured 155mm American howitzers attached to the 1st Australian Task Force at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province. Nui Dat was the headquarters for the New Zealand Army in Vietnam

*Right: MacKenzie's medals, berets and sash belts from his military career. His berets (from clockwise, lower left) belong to: Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, Parachute Regiment, SAS, South African Parabats, Sultan of Oman's Special Forces*



© Alastair MacKenzie & Osprey Publishing





MacKenzie carrying out a 'P' check with Patrol Company, 3 Para in the Ardoyne area of Belfast, 1974



MacKenzie receiving an award from Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman. He had risen from being a junior officer in the New Zealand Army to the second-in-command of Oman's special forces

Zealanders were all volunteers so this was a time to practice our skills against a live enemy."

For patrols, MacKenzie's unit would depart from a fire base and then fan out to pick up signs of the enemy, "Most of the time we operated as a full platoon or half-platoon to cut down the numbers as you were going through the jungle." MacKenzie also recalls that the Anzacs' fighting techniques differed from the Americans, "We obviously didn't have as many men as the Americans and we tried to find the enemy first. The Americans, with their preponderance of firepower, had an expression, 'Find and pile on' but we weren't in a position to do that. Consequently, we used guile rather than brute force."

Jungle tactics often came down to using gardening tools, "We would patrol quietly. New Zealand and Australian soldiers had fought in jungles before and we had the skills to move through them. For example, we would use garden secateurs to cut our way through the jungle as opposed to using machetes or saws. We'd also keep away from tracks whenever we could."

MacKenzie has since described jungle warfare as "one of the rawest operational environments in which to fight" and explains that self-reliance was essential, "You had to carry everything with you because you couldn't rely on long supply columns of water and food

to come to you. You're very self-dependent and each little group relies on working and living together as a team. I always found the jungle to be neutral – it would neither hinder or help you but it could make life difficult if you didn't manage it properly."

### Contact with the Viet Cong

The problems of fighting in the jungle were not just confined to nature and it wasn't long before the New Zealanders made contact with the enemy. In July 1970, MacKenzie and his platoon were participating in Operation Nathan, which saw the New Zealanders become responsible for the security of Phuoc Tuy.

During this operation MacKenzie became involved in a battle inside a mine-ridden VC camp, "We'd been ambushing a track where we'd successfully killed a couple of VC. There were some blood trails leading into the mountains and on the maps were red spots where there had been mine incidents. These particular mountains were almost covered in red spots but we followed the blood trail, reached their camp and had a fire fight."

During a lull in this exchange of gunfire, MacKenzie called in artillery and air support although the former almost caused a friendly-fire incident, "I called in artillery fire to block off the enemy's withdrawal route but because

the artillery was in a valley the firing was at a high elevation and not particularly accurate. They landed quite close to us so I had to give a 'Check Fire' order but then the gunships came in. It was a heavy fire team of three Hueys with machine guns and rockets. They provided the gap between having no artillery and some fire support."

After the bombardment the platoon cautiously entered the camp but the desolated area was booby-trapped, "There were very competent North Vietnamese engineers and they had actually mined inside their camp, which was most unusual. As we started sweeping through the camp we started detonating mines."

MacKenzie recalls that avoiding mines was a matter of luck, "As we proceeded through the camp I stood next to a very large rock. As the next section moved through, I followed them up and in the following section one of my soldiers stood millimetres from where I had been standing. There was then this horrific 'boom' and he and some others were badly injured."

After this "nightmare experience", MacKenzie's platoon continued to patrol, clear camps and encounter the Viet Cong for months. Although these tasks were, by their nature, extremely hazardous, MacKenzie felt that leading a platoon was a valuable experience, "The training I had prior to going to Vietnam was excellent and after contacts [with the VC], the whole issue of responsibility as an officer became very clear to me. I had managed myself in very dangerous and tricky situations so my confidence had been established. That was the main thing."

He also respected the fighting qualities of the North Vietnamese forces, "They'd been fighting

**"THE AMERICANS, WITH THEIR PREPONDERANCE OF FIREPOWER, HAD AN EXPRESSION, 'FIND AND PILE ON' BUT WE WEREN'T IN A POSITION TO DO THAT. CONSEQUENTLY, WE USED GUILE RATHER THAN BRUTE FORCE"**



# KIWIS IN VIETNAM

New Zealand had a small military presence during the Vietnam War but it did not escape the domestic opposition to the conflict that also befell the United States and Australia

Between 1964-72 over 3,000 military and civilian personnel from New Zealand served in Vietnam. It was also the first war where the Australasian country did not fight alongside her traditional ally Great Britain. In the aftermath of WWII, New Zealand, like Australia, had developed closer ties with the United States and signed the 1951 ANZUS Treaty that agreed on military cooperation in the Pacific region.

Prime Minister Keith Holyoake officially sent troops to Vietnam in May 1965 and New Zealand's military presence reached a peak of 548 personnel in 1968. The army's units integrated within 1st Australian Task Force while the Royal New Zealand Air Force flew helicopters and transport aircraft. MacKenzie recalls that New Zealand's contribution was modest but proportionally significant, "We had engineers, a battery of guns and two infantry companies plus a number of other units. It almost came to a third of the New Zealand Army so they made a heavy commitment to Vietnam."

Like in the USA and Australia, there was a significant anti-war movement in New Zealand where serving soldiers were criticised, "There was a lot of dissent and the war was not viewed favourably. We were doing our government's bidding and its unfortunate that civilians felt we were 'baby

*New Zealand artillerymen are given an official reception by the South Vietnamese Army Command in Saigon*



*A Bell UH-1H Iroquois "Huey" helicopter of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Hueys were used by the RNZAF in Vietnam from 1971*

killers' etc. Australia and America had the same problem but they also had another issue. They had conscripts in Vietnam so there were a lot of unwilling soldiers whereas we were all volunteers."

Although New Zealand did not introduce conscription the government still began a phased withdrawal from Vietnam in line with the Americans. The last New Zealand troops left in December 1972 at a cost of 37 killed, 187 wounded and a bitter legacy of protest.



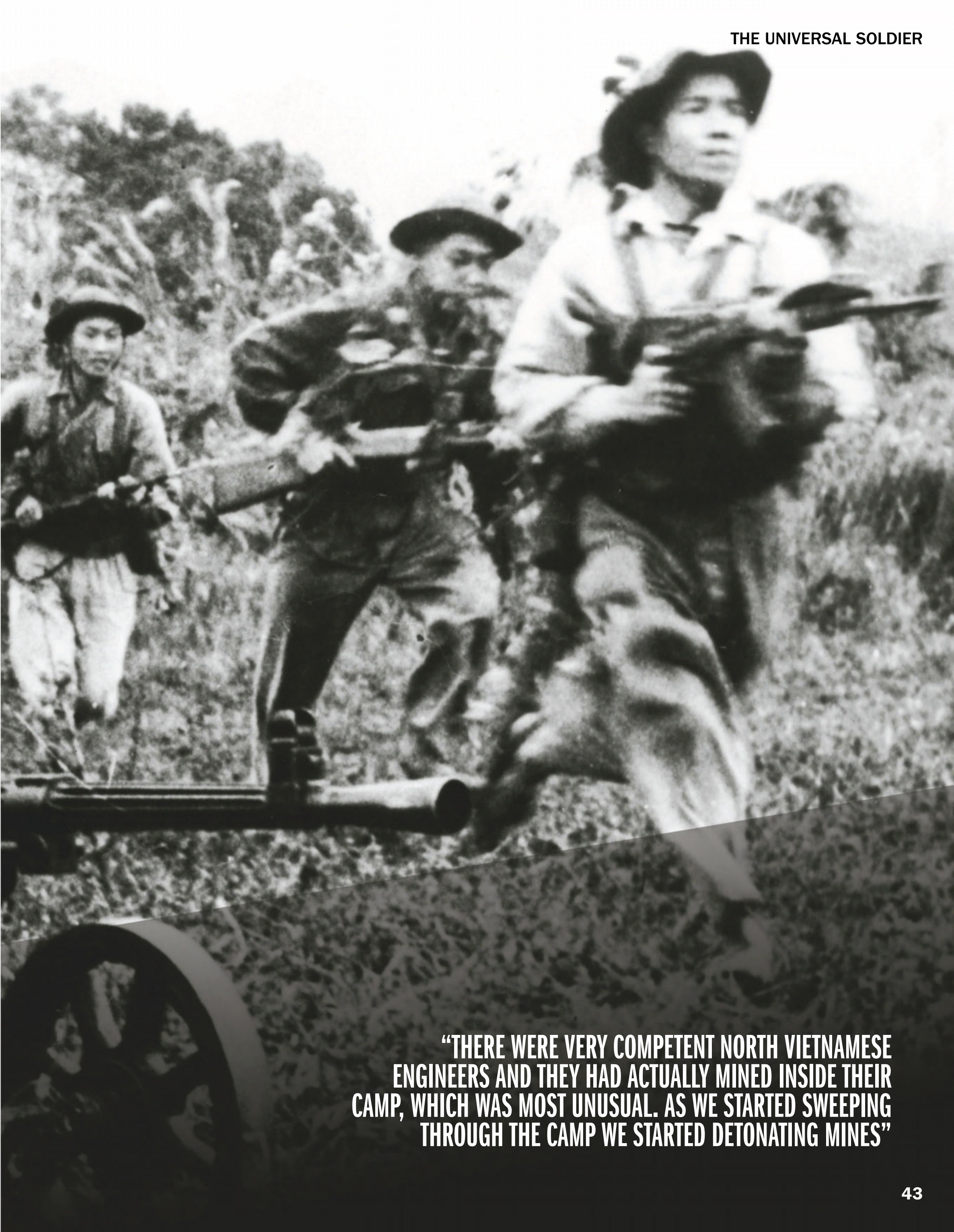


## THE UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

*Mackenzie's principal opponents in Vietnam were the Viet Cong who he describes as "good fighters"*







**“THERE WERE VERY COMPETENT NORTH VIETNAMESE ENGINEERS AND THEY HAD ACTUALLY MINED INSIDE THEIR CAMP, WHICH WAS MOST UNUSUAL. AS WE STARTED SWEEPING THROUGH THE CAMP WE STARTED DETONATING MINES”**



for a long time although the North Vietnamese Army didn't get along particularly well with the Viet Cong. They felt they were rather superior but their training was obviously better because they were regular troops.

"However, they were all good fighters and you couldn't give them an inch. If you took them for granted you got a bloody nose."

MacKenzie received a Mention in Dispatches for his service in Vietnam and was recommended for the Military Cross. However, like his father before him, he did not receive the medal, "I'm proud to say I was recommended for the Military Cross but they had a quota system for the number of medals that were issued.

"They ultimately didn't have enough to go around and the amusing thing for me was that my father was in a tank during WWII and received three Mentions in Dispatches. Because he had a wartime commission he also wasn't awarded an MC. He didn't have any options either so when I got a Mention in Dispatches but not an MC he found it very ironic."

3 Para

After returning from Vietnam, MacKenzie resigned from the New Zealand Army and joined the British Parachute Regiment. For a married officer with a young family this was a risky move, "Things were pretty quiet when I came back from Vietnam and the Parachute Regiment had always appealed to me. I wrote to them and asked if there was any opportunity of transferring. They said, 'You can't because that would be poaching but if you resigned from the New Zealand Army we'll certainly consider you'.

We bit the bullet. I resigned from the army and became a builder's labourer. Eventually, after some nervous months, the Parachute Regiment accepted me and I was posted to a patrol company in the 3rd Battalion (3 Para)."

MacKenzie and his family moved to Britain and he served three years with 3 Para as a captain between 1973-76. For his parachute training, MacKenzie was already experienced and had previously jumped from a famous WWII aircraft, "I was parachute trained before I went to Vietnam and was fortunate to train from a Dakota. When I went to the UK, I could proudly say that I'd jumped from a Dakota, which they hadn't done in Britain for many years."

Despite his airborne training, MacKenzie's active service with 3 Para would be of a completely different nature when he was deployed to serve in the fraught environment of Northern Ireland's "Troubles".

A "vicious and toxic atmosphere"

By the time MacKenzie arrived in Northern Ireland in February 1974, the province had been suffering sectarian civil strife since 1969. The complex political situation required a totally different method of military strategy. Nevertheless, no amount of preparation could prepare MacKenzie for his upcoming tour, "We had very comprehensive training before we went to Northern Ireland and a number of the Toms (paratroopers) and senior NCOs had been there before. But it was different when you got there. What you couldn't replicate was the vicious and toxic atmosphere of the whole place."

3 Para was first deployed to Belfast and based in Flax Street Mill, which was located between the pro-Republican Ardoyne Road and pro-Loyalist Shankill Road. In this urban environment, the paratroopers were vulnerable to attack, "You were living in the community and the mill was surrounded by normal houses. You'd guard the gate on a patrol and we used to say 'Targets Up' when you started a patrol and when you finished it was 'Targets Down'. This was because we were the targets but we patrolled in multiples so that in any given street there were patrols in the vicinity. This was to try and make the job of the terrorists on either side more difficult."

The paratroopers' task was clear, "We were there to protect the innocent majority who were understandably traumatised by terrorist shootings etc. The police couldn't look after everybody so we didn't get much support from either side. It was difficult and it always made me laugh that whenever there were decent TV programmes on there wouldn't be any rioting or shooting. We were also expressly told that we were there to maintain an 'acceptable' level of violence. I have to say that I thought, 'What is an acceptable level of violence? There should be no violence'. But that's the way it was."

MacKenzie was part of Patrol Company, 3 Para, whose task was to patrol Belfast's streets in open Land Rovers and establish covert observation posts. Because of their presence, relations were fraught with many of the local population. This included Protestant Loyalists, "We were seen as the hard men because we responded in kind towards

PARAS IN ULSTER

The Parachute Regiment served on the front line of the Troubles for decades but paid a high cost in both casualties and reputation

As one of the British Army's most elite units, the Parachute Regiment was extensively deployed in Northern Ireland. All three of its battalions saw service in the province and the regiment experienced an average of 14 tours. These could range from four months to over two years and the paratroopers operated in Belfast, Derry-Londonderry and South Armagh. The Paras' routines involved patrolling, vehicle checkpoints, ambushes, OP surveillance and riot control. They operated under the constant threat of snipers and bombs but their accumulated tours amounted to 24 years and six months of active service.

During this time, the regiment was at the heart of some of the most controversial events of the Troubles, including the Ballymurphy massacre and Bloody Sunday. The latter became the most infamous event when troops from 1 Para shot dead 13 civilians and wounded 17 more during a civil rights march on 30 January 1972. The Official IRA then bombed the 16th Parachute Brigade's headquarters in Aldershot, Hampshire in revenge, which resulted in the deaths of six civilians and a military chaplain.

Bloody Sunday was one of the most significant events of the Troubles because it worsened the conflict by alienating Catholic and nationalist communities while increasing support for the IRA. The soldiers of 1 Para were ultimately found to be at fault on Bloody Sunday when the findings of the Saville Inquiry were published in 2010 and attempts to prosecute former paratroopers continues to be a polarising political issue.

Nevertheless, terrorists murdered approximately 90 per cent of those killed during the Troubles, 60 per cent of which were committed by Republican paramilitaries. Consequently the Parachute Regiment suffered proportionally heavy casualties and 51 paratroopers were killed between 1971-96.

The first was Sergeant Michael Willetts who was posthumously awarded the George Cross for saving the lives of civilians and policemen in May 1971 during a Provisional IRA bomb attack. Sixteen paratroopers were also killed in the Warrenpoint ambush in 1979, which was the deadliest attack on the British Army by the Provisional IRA. In total the regiment received over 40 gallantry awards, 180 honours and 60 Mentions in Dispatches in what became the longest campaign in the history of airborne forces.

Soldiers take away civil rights demonstrators on Bloody Sunday after the paratroopers had opened fire, 30 January 1972



Paratroopers guard the perimeter around Drumcree Church on the eve of a controversial Orange Order parade in Portadown, 7 July 2001



*MacKenzie being briefed by Lieutenant John Winton in South Vietnam, early 1971. Winton was later killed in action*



© Alastair MacKenzie & Osprey Publishing





terrorism. The Protestant community was more forthcoming but when things kicked off they were just as bad as the Republicans. One of the reasons was because we were stopping them from terrorising the other side.”

Relations were so tense that MacKenzie and his unit was almost killed by a Loyalist mob, “We were in a four-man ‘brick’ (patrol). The driver was driving the Land Rover and three of us were on the Shankill Road, which was normally relatively placid. There was another incident nearby where for some reason a Protestant mob attacked an armoured Humber Pig and actually pulled one of the doors off. The officer in charge had to open fire to protect his soldiers and it was a Saturday afternoon. The pubs emptied and there was this baying crowd on the street who wanted to pull us limb from limb.”

Because of the political ramifications, MacKenzie’s combat skills counted for nothing in front of the violent crowd, “It was the most frightening experience. When you’re holding a long-barrelled weapon, there’s not much you can do with it other than shoot people. However, the ‘Yellow Card’ restrictions were very prescriptive, as they should be. The problem was: what do you actually do if you have an option of firing a heavy-calibre bullet or doing nothing? It’s quite an awkward dilemma.”

The patrol was able to quickly leave the area on that occasion but MacKenzie remembers how dehumanising the sectarian violence was, “Both parties in Northern Ireland were so vicious and murderous and what they did to each other was incomprehensible. Some of the things I saw you can’t un-see. This was

because both parties, but predominantly the Republicans, would torture, maim and terrorise. That to me was inhuman.”

The Troubles were not confined to Belfast and 3 Para also did a tour in South Armagh on the border with the Republic of Ireland. This rural posting was still perilous, “The area was fairly under-populated and you could travel over open fields and hardly see anybody but it didn’t make it any less dangerous. Using vehicles, unless they were undercover vehicles, made them a prime target for explosive devices whereas in the cities you could mingle among the crowds and have multiple patrols.”

### Operations with the SAS

After three years with 3 Para, MacKenzie applied to join the Special Air Service (SAS) after being inspired by one of their training courses, “One of the things the 3 Para patrol company did was to attend a ‘Resistance to Interrogation’ course, which was run by the SAS. There were also pilots and other people who were likely to be captured. I found it interesting and decided to have a shot at selection.”

The selection process to enter the SAS was gruelling, “It was very arduous, both mentally and physically, but the thing that got you through was mental strength. You could be as strong as an ox but the selection process could wear you down.”

Nevertheless, MacKenzie was selected and remained a captain when he joined 8 Troop, B Squadron, 22 SAS Regiment.

MacKenzie served in the SAS between 1976-80 and was redeployed to South Armagh.

He discovered that the SAS were even more unwelcome than the paratroopers, “We probably had a more difficult time because the powers that be were very unhappy with the SAS being there. There was a bit of ill feeling and before we went to Northern Ireland we had our weapons forensically tested. This was pretty insulting, particularly if they were assuming that this highly trained organisation was going to go around causing terror and mayhem.”

22 SAS were tasked with conducting operations that would lead to the apprehension of armed members of the IRA. South Armagh was known as “Bandit Country” but the SAS had difficulty cooperating with the local police. This hampered intelligence gathering, “We couldn’t deal directly with the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) Special Branch and instead went through liaison officers. Special Branch lived there, knew everything, and had the information. It disappointed me that we couldn’t have a more direct relationship but we did our best. There was no easy answer but we probably could have done it better if we’d had clearer intelligence.”

Despite the constrictions, 22 SAS did help to restrict the IRA’s movements and they operated across the province, “Other units such as the Paras were based in identifiable locations whereas we flitted about. The IRA didn’t really know where we were and that’s always unsettling for any kind of opposition.”

The fact that the SAS was operating in Northern Ireland at all gives some sense of the scale of the conflict. Of the 3,500 people that were killed across 30 years, 32 per cent were

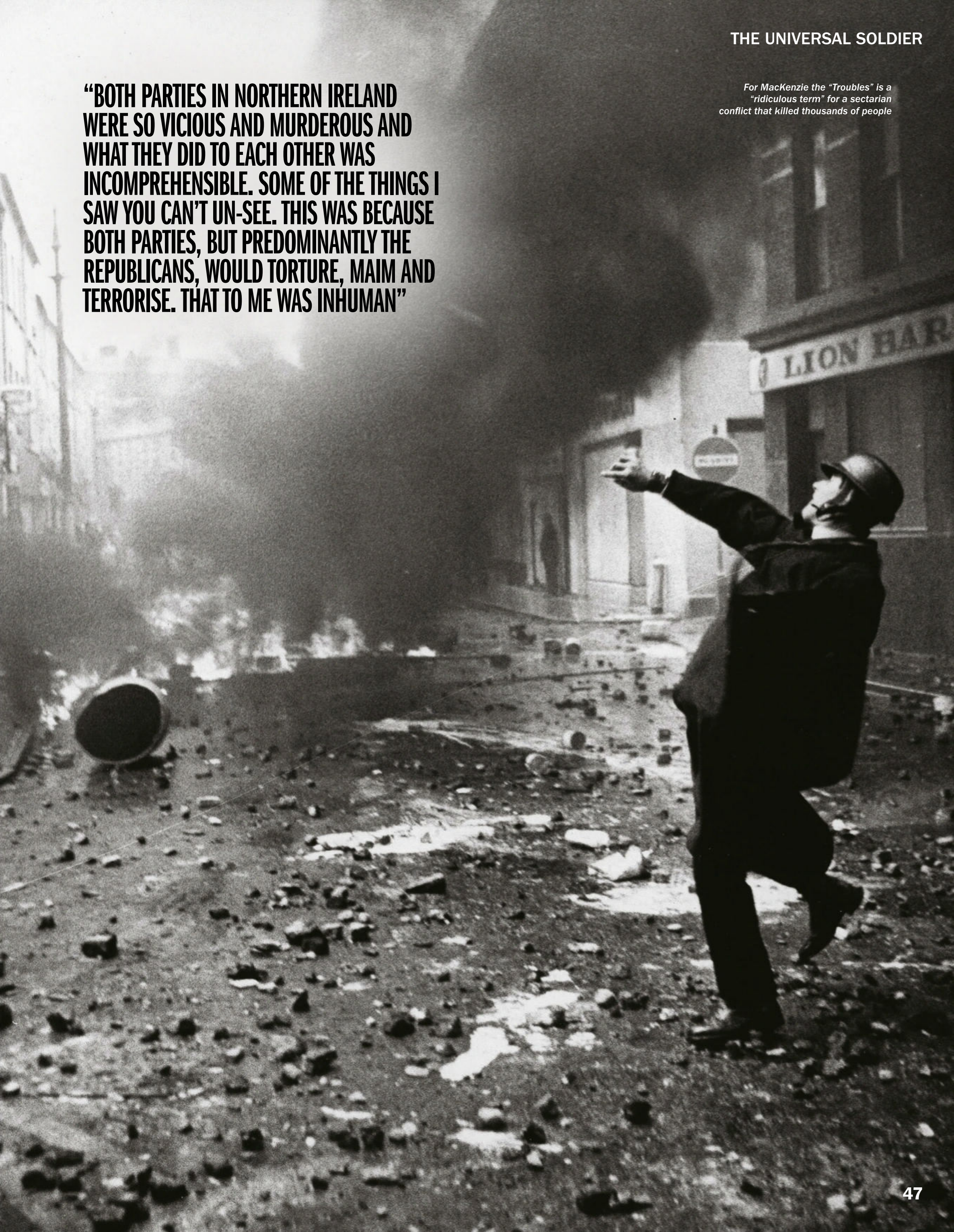


*Provisional IRA members receiving gun training in Derry-Londonderry, c.1972*



*For MacKenzie the "Troubles" is a  
"ridiculous term" for a sectarian  
conflict that killed thousands of people*

**"BOTH PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND  
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*A victim of an IRA bomb blast, which killed six and injured 146 people, is treated by soldiers from 2 Para on Donegall Street, Belfast, 21 March 1972*

from the British Armed Forces and MacKenzie believes the “Troubles” is an understatement, “The term is so ridiculous although I suppose if you tone it down to that word it doesn’t sound as grim as ‘war’ or ‘open conflict’. The Troubles were full on. You were there with loaded weapons and were against people with mines, explosive devices and obviously loaded weapons as well.”

Despite his experiences of Vietnam and subsequent conflicts in South Africa and Oman, MacKenzie considers Northern Ireland to be his toughest fighting experience, “I served four tours there: two undercover, two in uniform and it was a very difficult soldiering experience. They were hard times, there were lots of casualties and I would say it was the least professionally satisfying part of my military career. However, I take my hat off to the British military for the way they maintained their discipline through some very difficult times.”

## South African and Omani forces

After his SAS service MacKenzie returned to the Paras before he was recruited to join the South African Special Forces as a major in 1981. He was second-in-command of the South African 44 Parachute Brigade and also commanded a pathfinder company. For the latter unit, MacKenzie served in a multinational outfit and operated in southwest Africa as part of the South African Border War.

This asymmetric conflict was fought between 1966-90 and MacKenzie noticed that there were similarities with Northern Ireland, “Communist insurgents were coming down from Angola and laying mines, shooting people etc. We were there, once again, to protect the population both black and white. We were also occasionally required to go over the border on operations to stop the supply of mines, weapons and terrorists into southwest Africa.”

MacKenzie left the South African forces in 1982 and after returning to both the SAS

and New Zealand Army for several years he then joined the Sultan of Oman’s Special Forces (SSF). This move was a progression from previous employment, “I’d worked with a company in the UK called KMS and they logistically managed the Oman Special Forces. They were composed of former Jebali rebels who had fought against the previous sultan in Oman. When the new sultan overthrew his father he removed a lot of the issues that the insurrection was about.”

Now a lieutenant colonel, MacKenzie commanded Jebalis and became the second-in-command of the SSF while also running the counterterrorism unit. He served in Oman between 1985-89 before he finally retired from full-time soldiering. MacKenzie moved to Britain and remained a reservist in the Territorial Army but he also obtained a doctorate from the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Lancaster before he permanently returned to New Zealand.

## Teamwork, politics and black humour

With such a long and varied career, MacKenzie’s common thread has always been his appreciation of teamwork, “Soldiering, particularly small group operations, has always appealed to me. It’s the planning, selection of targets, operation, carrying out the task, bringing your team home in one piece and also causing minimum casualties to the opposition. You acted as a scalpel rather than a hammer and that’s sort of thing I’ve pursued in my military career.”

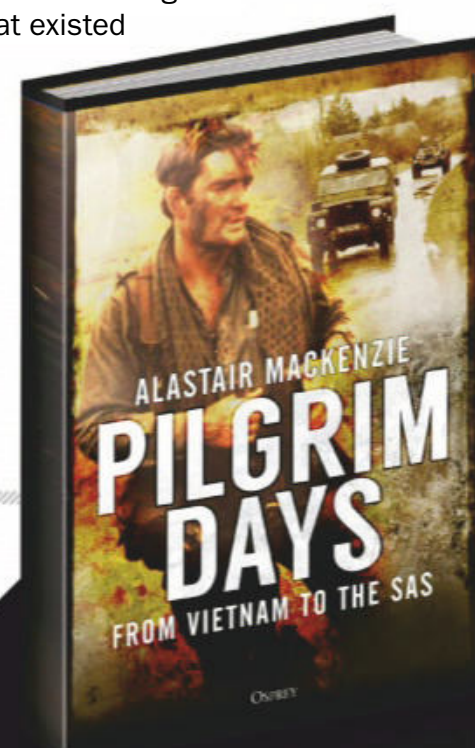
MacKenzie fought in conflicts that were mired in complex, controversial politics, particularly in Vietnam and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless,

despite his awareness, the realities of combat overrode any political qualms, “The big political picture is one that you’re well informed about. However, although it’s always in the back of your mind, when you’re on the ground your area of interest becomes much smaller. You’ve got specific tasks to do and you get on with that. For example, in Vietnam there was you, a bit of jungle and the opposition who was also in the jungle.”

Because of his international fighting experiences, MacKenzie has written, “Commitment, integrity, honesty and preparedness are essential ingredients for the Universal Soldier.” He has subsequently added another quality, “Loyalty too: loyalty up and loyalty down. This means loyalty to your senior officers but also to your soldiers. It’s easy to go one way or the other but the tough bit is making sure you get that balance right.”

Although he served in four armies MacKenzie states that, despite many differences, humour was always present among the soldiers he served with, “Sometimes I’m asked to compare the different organisations but that’s very difficult because they were all efficient in their own way. The standard thing was the black, military sense of humour. There might be slight variations but that existed everywhere and I think it’s necessary for the profession of arms. Sometimes civilians find the sorts of thing that make soldiers smile and laugh to be horrific but it helps you get through the nastiness of fighting.”

Alastair MacKenzie is the author of the autobiography *Pilgrim Days, From Vietnam To The SAS*, which is published by Osprey Publishing. To purchase a copy visit: [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com)



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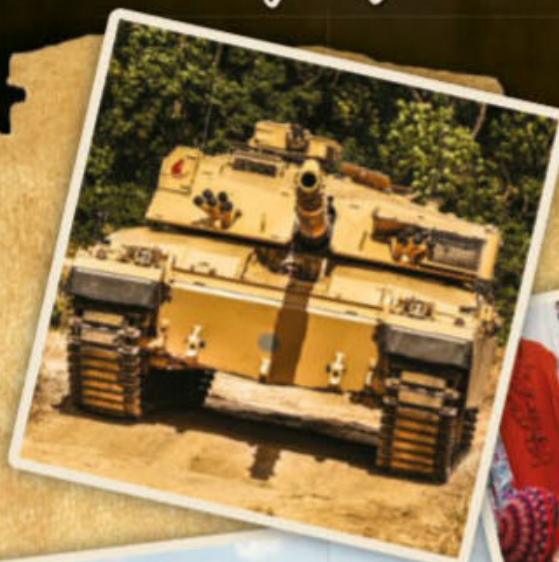
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## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# RAMBAHADUR LIMBU

Sarawak, Borneo, 21 November 1965 – Lance Corporal Rambahadur and two companions from his platoon crept to within ten feet before the enemy machine-gun post spotted them and opened up, raking them with bullets

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

In his brief autobiography, *My Life Story*, Rambahadur Limbu remembers how, as a young man, perhaps 15, he and two friends ran away from their Himalayan village of Chyangthapu to join the army as boy soldiers. Rambahadur had heard stories from his father who had served in the Gurkha during the Second World War fighting the Japanese. These stories inspired Rambahadur to want to be a soldier. His father died when he was eight (along with nine other members of his family leaving only Rambahadur and two brothers).

Unfortunately this first experience of army life was not what Rambahadur expected and he soon deserted and returned home. He left Chyangthapu again at 17 to seek work, first in Darjeeling and then in the kingdom of Sikkim, but ended up almost accidentally joining the army again in November 1957 at 19 despite his fears that he might be recognised as the boy soldier who had deserted. He was not.

Rambahadur had grown from 4'4" (132cm) to his adult height by this time and later assumed this was why he was not recognised. He took the Gurkha oath of allegiance, his right hand on the Union Jack repeating the oath in front of a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. By December 1957 he was in Malaya training at Sungei Patani. After ten months of training he joined the Second Battalion of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles at the Majedee Barracks in Johore Bahru in October 1958. He made several patrols during the next few years during the Malayan Emergency but the enemy continued

to elude his platoon's ambushes. He saw some dead insurgents killed by the First Battalion but saw no real action himself although he was made intimately aware of jungle operations. This experience would be invaluable in Borneo.

On leave in 1961 Rambahadur married. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in 1963 and by that time serious troubles had begun in Borneo, especially Brunei and Sarawak. At the conclusion of the Malayan Emergency in July

*Below: Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu, 26, in London to receive the Victoria Cross from the Queen*



1960, plans were put into place to incorporate British North Borneo and Singapore into Greater Malaysia. This idea was met with fierce opposition from President Sukarno of Indonesia and in 1962 Indonesia began supporting revolutionary factions on the large, dense jungle island of Borneo.

The Confrontation proper broke out in December 1962 when companies of the North Kalimantan National Army (NKNA) attacked police stations in Sarawak and Brunei. British reinforcements were flown in quickly, the first two companies of the 1/2nd Gurkhas arriving within hours. Other reinforcements soon followed and by February all towns in Brunei and Sarawak had been cleared of rebels. The 1,600km border between Kalimantan and Sarawak, however, continued to be raided and troops of the Gurkhas, Royal Marines of 40 and 42nd Commandos, A Squadron of the 22nd Special Air Service, the armoured cars of the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars, and other units patrolled the border. All these troops amounted to some 14,000 men to patrol 1,000 miles of border, or only 14 men per mile.

With so few troops along such a massive border they were spread incredibly thin. Indonesian troops continued to mount raids across the border from 1963 (34 attacks were launched across the border in July 1964 alone). These raids met with varied success. More Commonwealth reinforcements, codenamed Spineforce, arrived in December 1963. In November 1964 Rambahadur joined his battalion on Borneo to patrol the Sarawak



**“HIS ACTIONS ON THIS  
DAY REACHED A ZENITH OF  
DETERMINED, PRE-MEDITATED  
VALOUR WHICH MUST COUNT  
AMONGST THE MOST NOBLE ON  
RECORD AND IS DESERVING  
OF THE GREATEST ADMIRATION  
AND THE HIGHEST PRAISE”**

*Captain Rambahadur  
Limbu remains active in  
remembrance services  
around the Commonwealth*



HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

border. Many of these patrols were Claret Operations, activities on the Kalimantan side of the border and designed to keep Indonesian forces on the defensive. These were instigated by Director of Borneo Operations, Major-General Walter Walker in July 1964 and would continue until July 1966 under his successor Major-General George Lea.

During one such cross-border patrol in the Bau District (the extreme western edge) of Sarawak on 21 November 1965 men of C Company, 2/10th Gurkhas located a platoon-strength (30-40 men) enemy position entrenched on a sheer, T-shaped hill, 500 feet (152 metres) high.

The only approach to this position was along a knife-edge ridge. C Company's commanding officer, Captain "Kit" Maunsell, had 100 men under his command. They had departed at 6.00am and taken six hours to approach the enemy position unseen and it was now early afternoon. The terrain was incredibly difficult, consisting of high-on impenetrable Bekula ferns. An advance of 150 metres an hour was considered to be good progress.

The three men of Rambahadur's bren gun support group from 7 Platoon, he and riflemen Kharkabahadur Limbu and Bijuliparsad Rai, were in the van of the advance on the left of the enemy position. Rambahadur was in charge of positioning, directing and supervising the

bren which his two riflemen operated – one carried the ammunition and reloaded, the other carried the LMG and fired it.

The men crept forward to within only four metres of the first enemy trench when the machine-gunner manning the trench spotted them. He immediately opened fire and Bijuliparsad, to Rambahadur's right was hit. Rambahadur rushed forward and killed the sentry, taking possession of the enemy trench alone. The entire enemy force was now alerted to the Gurkhas' presence and opened fire on them, concentrating their fire on the trench which Rambahadur occupied.

Rambahadur realised that he could not support the advance of his own platoon from the enemy trench position and so left the safety of the trench under sustained and heavy enemy fire in order to lead his bren group to a better position, some 25 metres away. He shouted and pointed his intentions to the platoon commander, Ranjit Rai, and then advanced, yet again, into a hail of enemy fire. In this second advance both Bijuliparsad and Kharkabahadur were seriously wounded.

According to his own recollection, seeing his comrades' blood made his own blood boil and "blood for blood and nothing but blood could settle the account", but seeing them incapacitated he realised that he needed to aid them rather than continue the attack alone.

Under furious and accurate enemy fire from at least two machine-gun posts, Rambahadur made his way towards his wounded men. He inched forward towards them but as he reached out to the closest wounded man he was driven back by enemy fire. Rambahadur realised that only speed would allow him to rescue his comrades. He rushed forward and threw himself beside the first of them.

Directing two LMGs which had come up in support on his right, he hoisted the rifleman and carried him to safety. He immediately returned, still under fire, to the side of the second wounded rifleman. According to his citation, the enemy now concentrated even more fire on Rambahadur to prevent the rescue of his comrade, but the lance corporal made a series of short rushes to the side of the wounded rifleman. At one point he was pinned down for several minutes by accurate fire, bullets striking all around him. He reached the second wounded man, hoisted him on his shoulders and carried him to safety. The entire action took 20 minutes and Rambahadur was under sustained enemy fire for the duration.

With typical humility, Rambahadur's own account dwells far more on his feelings for his wounded comrades than on his own actions in the three bold attempts he made to rescue his colleagues. He also credits his short, 5'3" (160cm) stature, for the reason the enemy



A typical patrol during the Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation



From a series of photos taken of Rambahadur 'in action' on Borneo after his award (in some he carries an SLR, in others an M16)



bullets passed over him, even though he spent much of the action pinned to the ground and behind scant cover. His account of his bravery is only two paragraphs and he gives overwhelming credit to his commanding officers (Lieutenant Colonel P. O. Myers and Company Commander Captain C. E. Maunsell) stating, of the two, “Whatever we achieved that day we could never have achieved without the brilliant planning and leadership.” Later he maintained that, “The award is equally shared by all the officers and my fellow soldiers who were serving with me in the days of trouble.”

After rescuing his rifleman colleagues, Rambahadur then re-joined the attack on the left flank. Once more under fire, he gathered up the LMG his wounded men had been forced to abandon. Several more rifleman joined him in a last charge on the enemy position and Rambahadur personally killed four Indonesians in the final firefight. The enemy force was destroyed with 24 dead. The Gurkhas suffered three men killed and two wounded. Unfortunately, both the men Rambahadur had rescued died of the wounds they had sustained. Those casualties would have been far higher if not for Rambahadur’s brave actions and the inspiration he gave to the men around



*Lance Corporal Rambahadur at Flagstaff House, Singapore, where he received notice that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross*

## “THAT HE WAS ABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT HE DID AGAINST SUCH OVERWHELMING ODDS WITHOUT BEING HIT, WAS MIRACULOUS”

him. His actions were part of a larger battle known as Gunong Tepoi. At an hour long and with high enemy casualties, this was one of the largest and longest actions of the campaign.

In his autobiography, Rambahadur speaks of a premonition he received the night before the action for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He dreamed that his unit would be involved in heavy fighting and that he would be responsible for its failure or success. In his dream he saw a glowing red arc of fire in front of his unit, “a big red burning sun on the ground”, and he alone stepped inside the arc, the other men afraid to step towards it. When he had stepped inside the arc of fire he felt a “strange kind of happiness” and at that moment he woke.

In early 1966, Rambahadur returned to Singapore from Sarawak to discover that his wife was gravely ill. She was admitted to hospital but died on 6 February, with her husband at her side, and leaving Rambahadur the widowed father of two boys, a five year old and a five month old. The tragedy of Rambahadur’s loss at the moment his bravery was being recognised was not lost at the time. Rambahadur tells of his great grief at the loss of his wife at the time rumours of his award were circulating at the barracks (his award was gazetted in April 1966). In his grief, he had decided to leave the army but his officers were lenient with his outbursts – he spoke only in Gurkhali and had to have an interpreter translate for him. Preparations

to send Rambahadur to England to accept his Victoria Cross were made as soon as it had been gazetted – he arrived in late May, 1966. Rambahadur speaks of the Gurkha desire to visit England at least once and that he never expected to meet Her Majesty. His eldest son accompanied him to Buckingham Palace for his investiture on 13 July 1966 and the Queen expressed her wish to meet with Rambahadur’s son after the ceremony. Rambahadur was dismayed that his son played with a roll of caps in the presence of the Queen, giving her a scare! For years he continued to remind his son that he was the only person in the world who had ever behaved in such a way before the Queen.

Rambahadur did not leave the army and would in fact serve for 27 years attaining the rank of Queens Gurkha Officer, the equivalent of captain although sometimes listed as lieutenant. On a train journey home to Nepal in 1967, Rambahadur’s medal and all his belongings were stolen from his train carriage. A replacement Victoria Cross was issued along with his other service medals which were also stolen.

At 79, Rambahadur Limbu is the third eldest surviving recipient of the Victoria Cross (the eldest are 99-year-old John Alexander Cruickshank, and 85-year-old Keith Payne). Captain/Queens Gurkha Officer Rambahadur is still active in remembrance services around the world – in 2018 he travelled to Australia and joined in several events with other Victoria Cross recipients.





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THE PUNJAB, NORTHWEST INDIA 28 JANUARY 1846

WORDS DAVID SMITH

# ALI WAL

All India was watching as British and Sikh forces met on a level plain south of the River Sutlej





**S**ometime between 8 and 15 December 1845, Sikh forces crossed the Sutlej River in the Punjab, in northwest India. The exact date of the crossing is a subject of debate, but the result is not – war had broken out between the Sikh Empire and the British.

Tensions had been building in the region for years. The British East India Company, which had already taken control of the bulk of the country, did not have plans to attack the Sikhs, viewing them as a valuable buffer between British possessions and the states to the north. Despite this, the Sikhs were perceived as a potential threat, not least because their armed forces had expanded dramatically under Maharajah Ranjit Singh. After first uniting the various Sikh states, starting in 1801, he completely rebuilt the Sikh Army, placing a disciplined infantry force at its heart and relegating the cavalry to a supporting role. A massive artillery arm was also steadily built up and by the time of Ranjit Singh's death, in 1839, the Sikh Army was arguably the strongest in India and the strongest the British East India Company had ever faced.

After the death of the great leader, the Sikh state began to suffer as rival factions competed for power. This, together with a rapid escalation in the size of the army (from around 38,000 at the time of Ranjit Singh's death to 70,000 by 1845), caused the British to become nervous.

Adding to the volatile nature of the situation, the Sikh aristocracy became scared of the power of its own army. With the military acting as powerbrokers, they played one political hopeful off against the other in return for higher wages and other perks. The state was falling into turmoil, but a simple solution offered itself – if the army could be turned against the British, it might be cut down to size. Both the British and the Sikh rulers, therefore, hoped to see the Sikh Army destroyed in the coming war.

### **An uncertain start**

Following inconclusive but bloody early engagements, at Mudki on 18 December and at Ferozeshah three days later, the British were just about holding their own. Under the unimaginative command of Sir Hugh Gough they had attempted to bulldoze the Sikhs with frontal assaults, but had paid dearly.

The British were also struggling to concentrate their forces, calling in troops from various garrisons while the larger Sikh army sat waiting. Catastrophe seemed to beckon, but the Sikh generals, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, were secretly communicating with the British and holding their bigger army in check. Without this treachery it is doubtful the British would have survived their early encounters. As it was, they suffered nearly 900 casualties at Mudki and more than 2,400 at the two-day battle of Ferozeshah. These were losses the British could not afford to sustain and even inflicting equal casualties on the larger Sikh force was small consolation.

The situation was grim, and it was about to get worse. Already outnumbered, the British learned that another Sikh army, 10,000 strong and commanded by General Ranjodh Singh, had crossed the Sutlej on 17 January. This new force threatened the British garrison at Ludhiana and might also pick off various reinforcement columns marching their way to join up with Gough. It would have to be dealt with.

Gough chose one of his best division commanders, Sir Harry Smith, to lead a small detachment against the new threat. Believing

*The 16th Lancers charge against the Sikh right flank*



**“UNDER THE UNIMAGINATIVE COMMAND OF SIR HUGH GOUGH THEY HAD ATTEMPTED TO BULLDOZE THE SIKHS WITH FRONTAL ASSAULTS, BUT HAD PAID DEARLY”**



# GREAT BATTLES

Ranjodh Singh to have as many as 30,000 men with him, Smith set fourth with a brigade of infantry, one of cavalry and just 18 guns.

Capturing a couple of Sikh-held forts on the march towards Ranjodh Sing’s men, Smith pressed on towards the Ludhiana garrison, requesting that they meet him near the village of Bhudowal. A miscalculation in his route, however, meant that his small force passed Bhudowal within range of the Sikh guns there, and he suffered 214 casualties while marching past. Unable to engage his superior enemy, Smith had no option but to accept the losses and press on.

The war was going badly for the British and rumours were starting to spread that they were in serious trouble. Smith’s mission became

even more critical – a defeat could see the whole region erupt in defiance of the British presence. “All India was at gaze,” Smith was later to comment.

## The Battle of Aliwal

The Sikh army had taken up a position near the village of Aliwal and on 27 January it was reinforced. A further 4,000 infantry crossed the Sutlej as well as 12 more guns. More importantly, the reinforcements were comprised of regular infantry, including the men of “Avitabile’s Brigade”, which had been trained by an Italian officer. The bulk of Ranjodh Singh’s force prior to that had been made up of irregular infantry and cavalry, and the new arrivals greatly strengthened his force.

Smith also received reinforcements, including two Gurkha battalions, more cavalry and more artillery. He now had an army totalling around 10,000 men, with 32 guns. Ranjodh Singh had approximately 12,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry and 52 guns. It promised to be a close fight.

Making the situation more difficult for the British was the fact that Ranjodh Singh was not party to the treachery of his fellow Sikh generals. He would do his best to secure the victory that could spell disaster to the British presence in the region.

Ranjodh Singh had his army on the move on the morning of 28 January, but the unexpected arrival of Smith caused him to halt in his tracks. Perhaps uncertain of how to proceed, or perhaps aware that the bulk of his army



*The 31st Regiment, which took part in every major battle of the war, in action at Mudki*

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was still made up of irregular troops, the Sikh commander decided that his best course of action was to take up a defensive position and allow the British to attack. His artillery, which was almost uniformly excellent, could then inflict losses on the British before the two armies came together.

Along a line roughly 2.5km long, Ranjodh Singh arranged his men. He spaced his guns out evenly, but massed his regular infantry, the best men at his disposal, on his right flank. The bulk of his line was therefore made up of shaky irregular troops, but the left flank was strengthened by a small force, including two guns, thrown forward into the village of Aliwal. From this line, the Sikhs awaited the advance of the British.

The Sikhs had the benefit of lining up along a low ridge, but a superior position had been ignored. A long nullah (a dry river bed with steep banks) would have made an excellent defensive position, but the opportunity was ignored. It is possible Ranjodh Singh simply misjudged the ground, or that he felt his men were too disorganised to move quickly enough to take up a position along the bank. As it was, he settled for ordering breastworks to be thrown up along the low ridge as quickly as possible.

Smith's army was a combination of British regiments, native infantry (regular troops recruited in India) and Gurkhas. It was common practice to mix British and native regiments together into brigades, and Smith therefore spread his three British units (the

# OPPOSING FORCES

**BRITISH**  
**LEADER:**  
Sir Harry Smith  
**INFANTRY:** 7,000  
**CAVALRY:** 3,000  
**ARTILLERY:** 32 guns

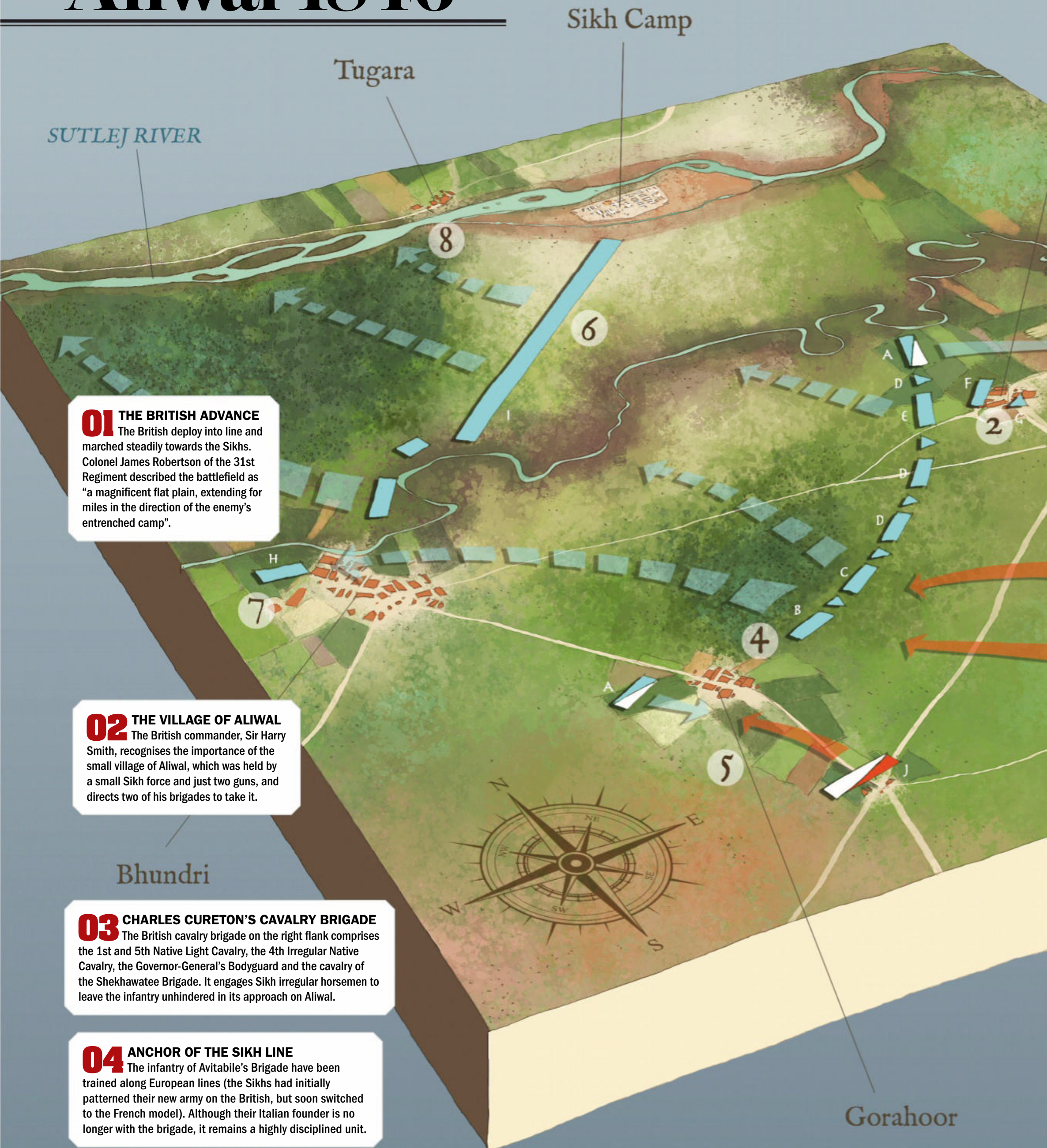
**SIKH**  
**LEADER:**  
Ranjodh Singh  
**INFANTRY:** 12,000  
**CAVALRY:** 2,000  
**ARTILLERY:** 52 guns

**“THE WAR WAS GOING BADLY FOR THE BRITISH AND RUMOURS WERE STARTING TO SPREAD THAT THEY WERE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. SMITH’S MISSION BECAME EVEN MORE CRITICAL – A DEFEAT COULD SEE THE WHOLE REGION ERUPT IN DEFIANCE OF THE BRITISH PRESENCE”**





# Great Battles Aliwal 1846



## 01 THE BRITISH ADVANCE

The British deploy into line and marched steadily towards the Sikhs. Colonel James Robertson of the 31st Regiment described the battlefield as "a magnificent flat plain, extending for miles in the direction of the enemy's entrenched camp".

## 02 THE VILLAGE OF ALIWAL

The British commander, Sir Harry Smith, recognises the importance of the small village of Aliwal, which was held by a small Sikh force and just two guns, and directs two of his brigades to take it.

## 03 CHARLES CURETON'S CAVALRY BRIGADE

The British cavalry brigade on the right flank comprises the 1st and 5th Native Light Cavalry, the 4th Irregular Native Cavalry, the Governor-General's Bodyguard and the cavalry of the Shekhawatee Brigade. It engages Sikh irregular horsemen to leave the infantry unhindered in its approach on Aliwal.

## 04 ANCHOR OF THE SIKH LINE

The infantry of Avitabile's Brigade have been trained along European lines (the Sikhs had initially patterned their new army on the British, but soon switched to the French model). Although their Italian founder is no longer with the brigade, it remains a highly disciplined unit.



Aliwal

## 05 THE 16TH LANCERS

A lighter cavalry brigade, made up of the 16th Lancers and 3rd Native Light Cavalry, is sent into action on the left flank. The native cavalry are repulsed by Sikh horsemen, but the 16th Lancers establish control of the area, threatening the Sikh flank.

## 06 THE SECOND SIKH LINE

With their left having crumbled, the Sikh centre and right flank are forced to form a second defensive line, anchored on the village of Bhundri. By now outnumbered by the British, the Sikh position is desperate and their general, Ranjodh Singh, makes his escape.

Kotli

## 07 THE STAND OF THE AVITABLES

The men of Avitabile's Brigade give ground steadily but remain unbroken, despite effective charges by the 16th Lancers. They eventually retire from the battlefield (taking their baggage with them) in good order and live to fight another day.

## 08 CARNAGE IN THE SUTLEJ

As Sikh soldiers attempt to escape by crossing the River Sutlej, hundreds are killed by British infantry and artillery, which mass on the south bank and fire on their helpless opponents. The vast majority of Sikh casualties are inflicted here.

Porein

### SIKH

- A. Irregular Cavalry
- B. Avitabile's Brigade
- C. Regular Infantry
- D. Irregular Infantry
- E. Artillery (62 guns)
- F. Aliwal Garrison
- G. Artillery (2 guns)
- H. Secondary position of Avitabile's Brigade
- I. Second Sikh line after falling back

### BRITISH

- J. 16th Lancers and 3rd Native Light Cavalry
- K. HM 53rd Foot, 30th Native Infantry and Shekhawatee Brigade Infantry
- L. Two Artillery Batteries (12 guns)
- M. HM 50th Foot, 48th Native Infantry, Simoor Battalion of Gurkhas
- N. Artillery Battery (18 guns, plus 2 Bn Howitzers)
- O. HM 31st Foot, 24th and 47th Native Infantry
- P. Nusseree Battalion of Gurkhas and 36th Infantry
- Q. 1st and 5th Native Light Cavalry, Governor General's Bodyguard, 4th Native Irregular Cavalry and Shekhawatee Brigade Cavalry

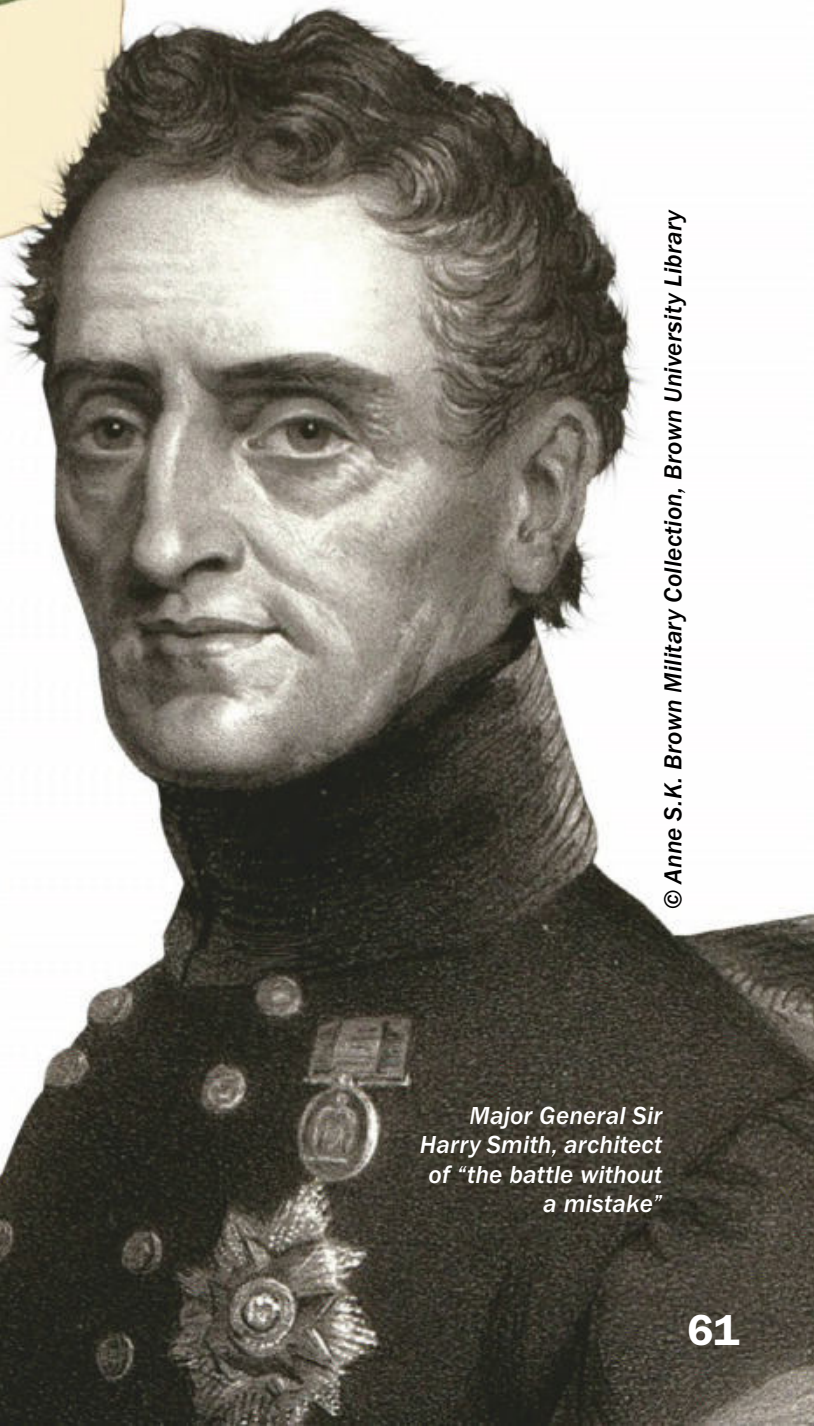
31st, 50th and 53rd Regiments) among the four brigades he formed for the battle. In contrast to the Sikh line, therefore, the British had spaced out their strongest regiments and had no obvious weak point.

### Taking the village

The village of Aliwal stood out as the obvious place on which to focus attention, and Smith directed two of his brigades to overwhelm the tiny Sikh garrison. After taking the village, the British would be able to outflank the Sikhs, delivering enfilading fire into the centre and left of their line. Whether or not Smith knew those troops were irregulars is uncertain but the battle would develop with the strongest British force directed against the weakest Sikh units.

The British advance was ominous in its organisation. A screen of cavalry parted and behind it the Sikhs could see the columns of British infantry advancing, already peeling away to form their battle line. The cavalry gathered on each flank and the horse artillery advanced with the infantry in a demonstration of discipline and precision.

The brigades approaching Aliwal included the 31st Regiment, which saw action in all the major battles of what would become known as the First Anglo-Sikh War. Within its ranks marched Colonel James Robertson, who later wrote a colourful account of his military life. Robertson described how his company approached the village to find two Sikh guns pointing directly at them. A cannonball cut half of the cap away on the head of the man marching next to him, without injuring him, but then smashed through the arm of the soldier behind. After closing in on the village, the men of the 31st were able to



Major General Sir Harry Smith, architect of "the battle without a mistake"

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open fire on the gun crews, killing or wounding all but two of them. The next moment, a Sikh officer rode out from the village and charged the advancing British line. Robertson advanced on him, but before the single combat could be joined the Sikh fell dead, riddled with bullets from the men of the 31st. Robertson looked down at the body on the ground before him and coolly bent down to pick up the Sikh sword as a souvenir.

On looking up again, Robertson saw one of the surviving gun crew members load canister into his gun and fire it at close range. Robertson put his hand across his face, but the canister only found the sole of one of his boots, ripping it clean off. The 31st then charged, killing the remaining gunners. Robertson made a slash with the Sikh sword on the gun as he ran past, marking it as his regiment's, and a soldier drew a '31' on both guns in the village with a piece of chalk, to underline the point. Aliwal had been taken.

### The right flank

To keep the opposite end of the Sikh line pinned down, Smith had directed his remaining two brigades to advance against the strongest Sikh troops. On this flank resistance was much sterner and the Sikh guns in particular proved lethal. British horse artillery kept up with the advance in order to counter the Sikh guns.

Under heavy fire from canister and chain shot, British troops were forced to periodically lie down to escape the deadly fire, standing

up again after a few minutes to move forward quickly and then drop again. Harry Smith had his telescope shot in half as he watched his men make their undignified progress, but eventually they were close enough to charge with bayonets fixed. A brigade of cavalry on the British left then rode into action, driving away the Sikh horsemen on that flank and threatening their infantry.

The Sikhs had no alternative but to regroup, and the small army did well in withdrawing and setting up a second defensive line under such intense pressure. The left flank had disintegrated, but the middle and right remained steady as they took up a new defensive position, anchored on the village of Bhundri. Their coolness under fire was all the more impressive considering Ranjodh Singh is believed to have fled the battlefield around this time. Unfortunately for the Sikhs, their commander was no traitor, but he was also no general.

Devoid of leadership, the new Sikh line could not stand for long. On its right flank the 16th Lancers were causing mayhem. Sikhs from Avitabile's Brigade were pulling back in good order but were forced to form square when threatened by the British cavalry (the brigade actually formed a huge triangle). A British officer watched as the 16th Lancers gathered themselves for a charge, "The charge of one squadron of the 16th Lancers, led by Major Smyth and Captain Pearson, upon a well-formed square of Avitabile's Regiment, deserves special notice," the officer later reported, "as, not

withstanding the steadiness of the enemy, the Lancers broke the square, charged through, reformed and charged again in splendid style." A successful charge of a well-formed square was, as the officer duly noted, "a feat very rarely accomplished," and the 16th Lancers were widely praised after the battle.

A fatal flaw in the Sikh position was now exploited, as they struggled to get across the river that lay between them and safety. The British horse artillery hounded the retreating men and 12 guns caught a portion of Avitabile's Brigade as they struggled to disengage.

Despite such brutal punishment, the disciplined regulars maintained their formation and retreated in good order. An admiring British officer noted that they "fell doggedly back, but never condescended to fly, though plied with musketry and shrapnel... Those troops, the pupils of Avitabile, did credit that day to themselves and their master... we must at least bear witness to their resolute courage and soldier-like bearing".

### The price of victory

Sikh losses were estimated at 3,000 by the British, but this was a wildly inflated number and it was more likely to have been in the hundreds. Most of the casualties were suffered when the battle was already beyond doubt, as the British poured fire into the mass of men struggling to get back across the river. The Sikhs also remained defiant to the last, refusing help from British troops even when seriously wounded and



English cavalry attacking the Sikh at the Battle of Aliwal, 1846



**“THE SIKHS ALSO REMAINED DEFIANT TO THE LAST, REFUSING HELP FROM BRITISH TROOPS EVEN WHEN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AND PREFERRING TO DIE RATHER THAN SURRENDER”**

preferring to die rather than surrender.

The British lost just 151 dead, with 413 wounded, a light price to pay for sending the potentially troublesome Sikh army packing. The 16th Lancers had won fame, but they had paid the price, with 59 men killed and 83 wounded.

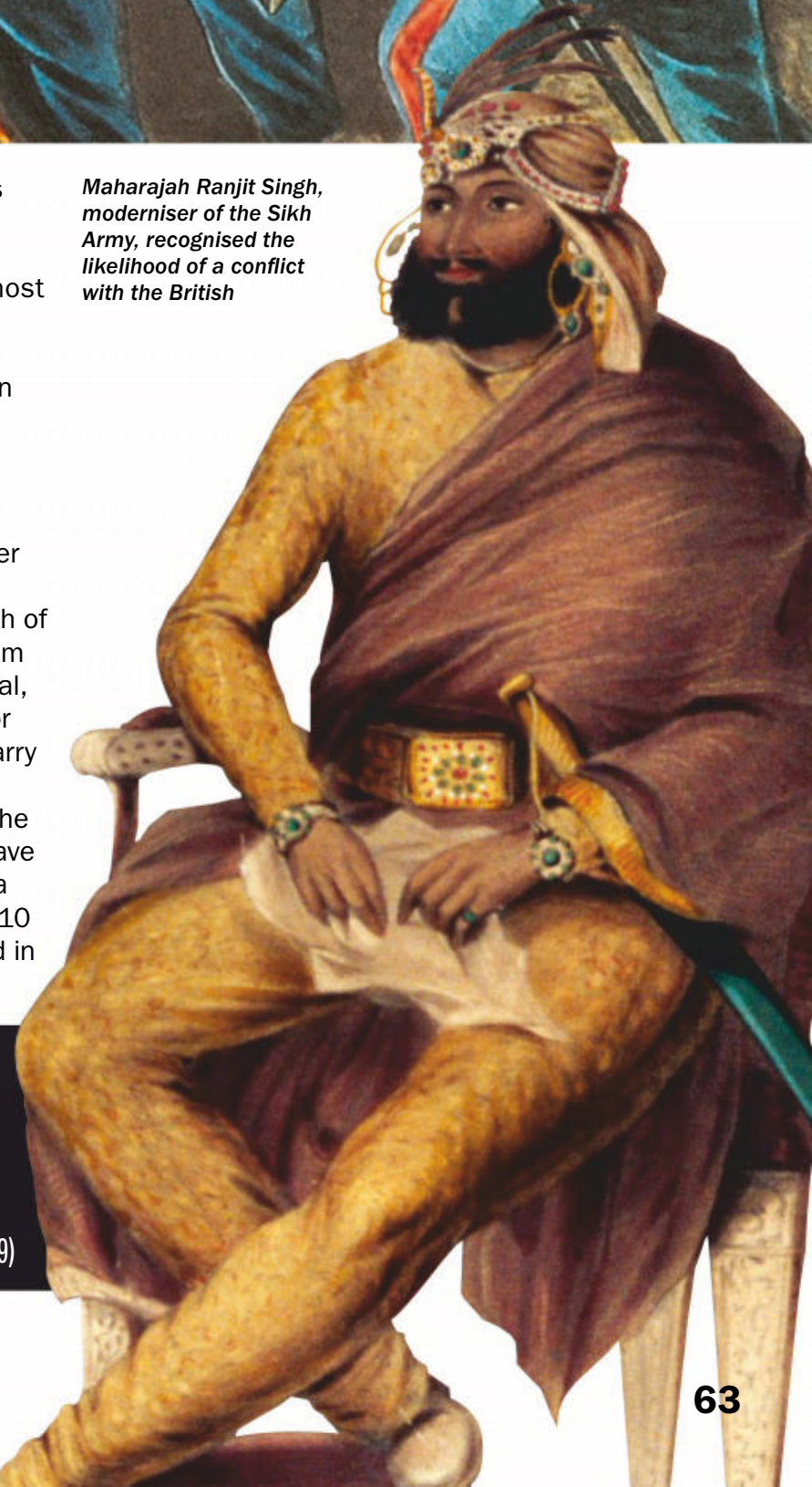
The chaotic retreat of the Sikh army made it almost impossible for them to take their guns with them. At the same ford in the river used by their reinforcements the previous day, the Sikhs attempted to drag a few guns to safety. Two became stuck in the deep mud and were abandoned, while a third sank in a patch of quicksand. Two guns made it to the opposite side of the river, but with British infantry and artillery crowding the south bank, it was simply too dangerous to carry the guns away and they were also abandoned. In the end, all 52 of the Sikh guns had fallen into British hands, as well as some that had been left in the Sikh camp.

It followed the pattern set by earlier battles in the war, where the Sikhs had steadily lost what had once been an overwhelming advantage in artillery. Smith arranged for most of the guns to be transported to the British garrison at Ludhiana, keeping the five best pieces with him as he headed back to rejoin the main British army.

The victory at Aliwal was hailed as a masterpiece (the British historian Sir John Fortescue dubbed it “the battle without a mistake”) and there was palpable relief after the early events of the war.

The Sikhs now held just one position south of the Sutlej, at Sobraon. They were given a grim warning several days after the Battle of Aliwal, when bodies of the men who had drowned or been shot while trying to escape from Sir Harry Smith’s forces slowly drifted down the river, past their camp. They held their ground for the last battle of the war, but Aliwal proved to have been a turning point – Sir Hugh Gough won a decisive victory at the Battle of Sobraon on 10 February and the First Anglo-Sikh War ended in British victory.

Maharajah Ranjit Singh, moderniser of the Sikh Army, recognised the likelihood of a conflict with the British



## FURTHER READING

- ★ AMARPAL SINGH, *THE FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR* (2010)
- ★ IAN HEATH AND MICHAEL PERRY, *THE SIKH ARMY: 1799-1849* (2005)
- ★ DAVID SMITH, *THE FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR 1845-46* (2019)



**“INSTEAD OF FENDING OFF ONE INVASION OF BOHEMIA AFTER ANOTHER, PROKOP CARRIED THE WAR TO THE ENEMY, THUS FREEING THE HUSSITE TOWNS FROM THE DEPREDATIONS OF WAR”**

## PROKOP THE GREAT

Prokop the Great is shown wearing plate armour, holding a bascinet with an attached padded aventail, and gripping a battle axe. The red stripe on his black surcoat and the chalice symbol are both universal systems of the Hussite movement.

Prokop the Great, as he became known, was a first-rate military commander and a brilliant strategist who steered the Hussites on a different course than that plotted by his predecessor Jan Zizka. Instead of fending off one invasion of Bohemia after another, Prokop carried the war to the enemy, thus freeing the Hussite towns from the depredations of war.





# PROKOP THE GREAT

Prokop the Great launched a series of offensives against neighbouring German principalities during the Hussite Wars, which broke the will of his Catholic foes

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

**W**hen the leading brotherhoods of the Hussite army were not banding together to fight their Catholic enemies, they were warring among themselves. Having vanquished the armies of King Sigismund of Hungary and his allies after 15 years of warfare, two opposing Hussite armies assembled in central Bohemia near the village of Lipany on 30 May 1434 to settle their differences with arms.

The Bohemian League, a combination of moderate Utraquists Hussites and Bohemian Catholics, opposed the radical Taborites. The Taborites, led by Prokop the Bald, set up their wagenburg atop a hill where they awaited the attack of the League's army.

The League also deployed a wagenburg. In both wagenburgs, handgunners and crossbowmen stood poised to fire through loops in the high wooden walls that protected them. Behind the wagons were foot soldiers armed with a wide variety of polearms, including awlpikes, flails, and spiked maces. A contingent of mounted Catholic men-at-arms led by Ulrich von Rosenberg had assembled in a concealed position behind the Utraquists' wagenburg.

The battle began with the Utraquists cautiously advancing their wagenburg towards the hill occupied by the Taborites. The primitive field guns possessed by each side banged away ineffectively at each other when the armies were still too far apart for their ordnance to do any damage. When the Utraquists moved close enough for the missile troops to begin firing, a sharp fight ensued. The battle grew in intensity as companies of infantry began making sorties

from their respective laagers. Perched atop one of the wagons on the top of the hill, Prokop the Great watched the spectacle of battle as he had so often before. After a decade commanding the radical brotherhoods in battle, he had great confidence in his men. Soon the Utraquists began to retreat, and he issued orders for a pursuit.

## Bohemian reformation

The Hussite Wars that roiled Bohemia and the adjacent regions in the early 15th century stemmed from the martyrdom of Prague preacher Jan Hus. Lured to the Council of Constance in 1414 with promises of protection by King Sigismund, he subsequently was burned at the stake as a heretic the following summer.

The Hussite Wars from 1419 to 1436 took on several forms. They consisted of Papal-directed

crusades against the Czech Hussites, civil wars between Germans and Czech Hussites, and internecine war among Hussite brotherhoods.

Upon the death of King Wenceslas IV, Sigismund sought to obtain the crown of Bohemia. Because he had betrayed Hus, he was unpalatable to the militant Hussites. Instead, the Hussites elected Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania as their king.

In an effort to crush the Hussites, Pope Martin V called a crusade against them in March 1420. Sigismund responded by invading Bohemia with 26,000 heavy cavalry. In a desperate clash atop Vitkov Hill on the south side of Prague, Jan Zizka's Hussite army won a crucial victory. Despite the Hussites' preference for a Lithuanian king, Sigismund was savvy enough to have himself crowned King of Bohemia while in Prague. Afterwards, he hastily departed from the city.

## Taborite captain

Nothing is known of Prokop's early life. He first appears in history as a radical Hussite preacher in the town of Sobeslav in 1417. He then became a fixture in Tabor in 1420 and New Town Prague the following year. His rise to the upper echelons of Hussite command began with his association with Utraquist preacher Jan Zelivsky and radical Hussite commander Jan Zizka.

During Zizka's tenure as chief captain of the radical Hussite army, Prokop devoted himself in the first years of the war primarily to spiritual and political affairs. He stressed the need for the Taborites and Orebites to work in concert with each other. It was during this time that he acquired the sobriquet "the Bald" because



Upon making contact with the superior Hussite army at Domazlice in 1431, the German Catholic crusaders fled in terror



of his preference for preaching with a shaved head and conducting mass in full vestments.

Zizka was a brilliant tactician who adopted the wagenburg, which had been used by Romans, Chinese, and Russians, into Bohemia to enable the Hussite peasants to fight on equal terms with the crusader heavy cavalry.

Following the signing of an armistice in November 1422 that ended the Third Crusade, the Hussite brotherhoods fought among themselves for nearly a year. During that time, Prokop assisted Zizka in vanquishing a rival Hussite army at Malesov in June 1424 that had been raised by the residents of Prague. The upshot of the clash at Malesov was that the Taborites and Orebites came to dominate Hussite affairs in Bohemia in the decade that followed.

When Zizka died from the plague during the siege of Pribyslav Castle on the Moravian frontier in October 1424, his Orebite soldiers began calling themselves the Orphans, having suffered the loss of their paternal leader. Prokop succeeded in persuading the grieving Orphans to continue fighting alongside the Taborites.

In the wake of Zizka's death, Prokop took command of the Taborites. As such, he devoted endless hours to improving the organisation of the Hussite armies, although there was little need to improve its tactics since Zizka had done such a superb job training and equipping the army. As captain of the Taborites, he participated in expeditions into Moravia and Silesia in 1425.

*Hussite soldiers were armed with crossbows, flails and primitive guns*

## Battle of Aussig

Between the Third and Fourth Hussite Crusades, the Germans and Hussites battled along the northwest frontier of Bohemia. A pitched battle unfolded on 16 June 1426 at Aussig-on-the-Elbe that pitted a Hussite army led by Lithuanian Duke Sigismund Korybut against a German army led by Frederick II, Elector of Saxony.

The Hussites deployed a large wagenburg on a hilltop where they awaited the inevitable German heavy cavalry attack. The Germans succeeded in breaching the wagenburg by fighting their way through gaps in the wagons, but they were checked by Prokop's reserve. The Hussites then counterattacked, leaving the battlefield littered with fallen Germans.

From that point on, Prokop began conducting pre-emptive strikes into the Bohemian dependencies (Lusatia, Moravia, and Silesia) to keep the Catholics off balance and to carry the destructive processes of war into their lands.

In October 1426 Prokop invaded western Moravia where he besieged Kemnitz Castle, which belonged to Agnes von Zesyma-Rosenberg. The Hussites drove the defenders into the castle's strong keep. When Agnes learned that no effort would be made to

relieve her, she surrendered. As part of the terms of surrender, Prokop allowed her to leave with her people.

In early 1427, Prokop chased Archduke Albert V of Austria's army from Moravia into Lower Austria. Overtaking the Austrians, Prokop inflicted a decisive defeat on it at Zwetl on 12 March 1427. The battle was significant because it was Prokop's first major victory on foreign soil. When Korybut ran afoul of the Hussites that year, Prokop became the Hussites' chief captain.

## Fourth Crusade

Although the first three crusades had failed, the Catholic Church remained committed to stamping out the Hussite rebellion. In early 1427 Pope Martin V appointed Cardinal Henry Beaufort the papal legate for Germany, Hungary, and Bohemia to coordinate a new crusade. The de facto leader of the crusade was Frederick I, Elector of Brandenburg.

Planning on a grand scale for a fourth crusade began shortly afterwards at Bamberg in Franconia. The strategic plan called for four separate Catholic crusader armies to converge on Bohemia from multiple directions. But in the end, the Catholics

**“BY THAT TIME IN THE HUSSITE WARS THE CATHOLIC CRUSADERS HAD COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE HUSSITE ARMY WAS INVINCIBLE”**





*Prokop the Bald was slain at the Battle of Lipany in 1434 in which moderate Hussites fought radical Hussites*



fielded just two armies. Archbishop-elect of Trier Otto von Ziegenhain led a German army into southwestern Bohemia, and Prince Frederick II of Saxony marched into northwestern Bohemia at the head of a Saxon-Silesian army.

Cardinal Beaufort crossed the Bohemian frontier in July with von Ziegenhain's army. Although its ultimate objective was Prague, the army stopped to besiege Stribro Castle, on the road to Pilsen. Prokop had no intention of taking a defensive stance. Instead he conducted a forced march with 17,500 troops to relieve the strategic castle.

At this stage in the Hussite Wars the Catholic crusaders had come to believe that the Hussite army was invincible. When word reached the crusader army that the Hussites were coming to attack them, they raised the siege of Stribro Castle and withdrew west. Having learned that the southern army was in trouble, Elector Frederick of Brandenburg ordered the Saxon-Silesian army to march immediately to their assistance.

As Prokop's men closed in on the 20,000 crusaders, the soldiers of the Cross panicked. The Hussites overtook the crusader army on 3-4 August in what became known as the Battle of Tachov. Beaufort tried his best to rally them, but it was beyond his power. After suffering heavy casualties, the survivors fled through the forested mountains to the safety of the Upper Palatinate. Hearing the news of the defeat at Tachov, the Saxon-Silesian army turned back.

Afterwards, Prokop's army besieged the fortified town of Tachov that had long been a

stronghold of the Catholics on the Bohemian frontier. In the ensuing siege, Prokop exhibited a great mastery of siegecraft.

The Hussites rolled bombards into place to batter the walls while trebuchets slung incendiaries into the town. Additionally, sappers began tunnelling into the base of the walls. Assailed by several means, the town fell in less than a week. The citadel surrendered a few days later.

### Peace talks

From 1427 to 1431, the Catholics made no attempt to invade Bohemia. Prokop was determined to continue his pre-emptive strikes into neighbouring lands. He led chevauchees into Austria, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Franconia, Hungary, and Saxony. Prokop's Hussites pillaged enemy lands and thrived on the plunder that they gathered on what they called *spanilá jízda* (meaning "beautiful ride"). As a result of their depredations, the Catholic peoples of central Europe greatly feared the Hussites. Just as the mention of Sir John Talbot's name terrified the French in the same century, so did the utterance of Prokop's name fill the Catholics with dread.

The Hussite raids damaged the reputation of King Sigismund and ultimately forced him to the peace table. These protracted negotiations involved the Hussites, central German electors and princes, and the Catholic Church. The talks began in 1429 and dragged on for four years. When the peace talks stalled in 1431, the Catholics mounted their fifth and final crusade against the Hussites.

Cardinal Julian Cesarini led a crusader army that invaded northwest Bohemia that August. The crusaders besieged the frontier town of Domazlice in the hope of gaining a quick success that would raise morale. The Hussites once again crushed the invaders in a pitched battle fought on 14 August on the outskirts of Domazlice. The Hussite victory brought the fifth crusade to an abrupt end.

By 1433 Papal negotiators had conceded to enough demands to compel the Utraquists to agree to a separate peace. The Taborites, who had the continued support of the Orphans, remained irreconcilable.

### Death in battle

When the Bohemian League army began withdrawing at Lipany, Prokop allowed his troops to pursue their seemingly beaten foe. By doing so, the Taborites fell into a trap.

The commanders of the Bohemian League had ordered a feigned retreat in the hopes of catching the majority of the radical Hussites outside of protective laager. The Bohemian League's foot soldiers pinned down Prokop's exposed infantry while the League's reserve of mounted cavalry carried out a flank attack that breached the Hussites' wagenburg.

In a last stand at the wagenburg, Prokop fell in combat. His death marked the beginning of the end for the Taborites and Orphans. Although Sigismund had lost all of the battles, he had won the war by pitting the moderates and radicals against each other. In August 1436 he declared the conflict over after 17 years and the restoration of peace in Bohemia.





# WWII'S GREATEST ESCAPE

## FROM THE GREATEST RAID OF ALL

Following an attack on German Army headquarters, one of the most daring rescue missions of the war was put into motion

WORDS DAMIEN LEWIS

**O**n paper, they didn't stand a chance. One hundred raiders, only 20 of whom were official Allied troops, were to assault a supposedly impregnable German Army headquarters, deep behind enemy lines. Several hundred soldiers armed with MG 42 Spandau machine guns (nicknamed Hitler's Buzzsaw due its fearsome noise), anti-aircraft weaponry and armour defended the HQ, against

which the raiders could muster only the arms they could carry on their person, the heaviest being an American-made M1 bazooka. It had the feel of a suicide mission, even if few had ever put that into words.

Their commander on the SAS side, Major Roy Farran DSO, MC and two bars had made it crystal clear in his briefings – no prisoners were to be taken. They were to target senior German officers, to “cut the head off the Nazi snake”. His

oppo in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) – Churchill's so-called Ministry for Ungentlemanly Warfare – Captain Mike Lees, was equally blunt. The two fortress-like buildings housing the headquarters, Villa Calvi and Villa Rossi, were to be left blasted, gutted ruins.

It was the winter of '44/45, and Italy had proven far from being the “soft underbelly of Europe” that all had intended. The Allied advance had stalled on the Gothic Line, a





string of machine-gun posts, concrete bunkers, tunnels, heavy guns, razor wire and minefields stretching across northern Italy's mountains. Manned by the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions, arguably some of the finest in the Reich, plus two Panzer Grenadier (mechanised infantry) divisions, it was a fearsome barrier.

All of Italy south of there had been seized, but territory to the north remained in German hands, excepting pockets of remote, mountainous terrain held by the Italian partisans. It was from one of those that Farran and Lees had mounted their mission, leading their motley band – mixing Italian Resistance fighters with escaped Russian POWs, a handful of former French Foreign Legion veterans, plus a smattering of German deserters.

At the tip of the spear were Farran and his 20 men from No. 3 Squadron SAS. If they could lay waste to the Villa Calvi and Villa Rossi, they would eviscerate the Wehrmacht's nerve-centre, commanding 100,000 men along the Gothic Line. That should catalyse the Allied breakthrough, saving countless lives, hence the urgency of their mission.

It was past midnight on 28 March 1945, when Farran and Lees mustered their raiders in the crescent-shaped, half-moon wood, within spitting distance of the two villas, each with its towers,

battlements and fancy, gated driveways. At the haunting sound of the bagpipes – David "The Mad Piper" Kirkpatrick playing *Highland Laddie*, the marching tune of the Highland Regiments – the raiders struck with utter surprise.

Farran demanded his men be piped men into battle. It wasn't simply for the spirit and the show. German reprisals against partisans had been terrible in recent months, whole villages being massacred. By having a piper play, Farran sought to stamp an indelible British signature on the raid, so precluding any such savagery.

It had entailed a herculean feat to get here, marching for two nights through terrain thick with the enemy, and the battle that ensued was particularly brutal and bloody. By the time 19-year-old SAS Lieutenant Ken Harvey, who led the Villa Calvi assault, was done, the building had been left a bloodied, bullet-pocked, burning ruin, the 14th Army's map room, registry, operations room and the W/T facilities being utterly destroyed.

But in Villa Rossi, where the senior German officers were billeted, things had not gone quite so well. SOE Captain Mike Lees had insisted on leading the assault, despite being wracked by malaria, which he'd caught on earlier operations. Storming the staircase, he was gunned down. Lees was left for dead,

the raiders fearing the attack had cost the life of the man who had conceived of it – it was Lees who had found the target, recced it and planned the audacious assault, calling Farran and his SAS in to lead it.

A veteran of Yugoslavia, where his sabotage operations with the guerrillas had earned him the nickname "Wild Man" Lees, he was a towering figure. His loss would be keenly felt.

Setting fire to Villa Rossi's ground floor, the raiders withdrew, but as they did so they stumbled upon a figure crawling for the door. It was Mike Lees. He'd been shot five times – in the leg, hip, chest, left arm and right calf, but somehow was still alive. Refusing to leave him, the raiders strapped Lees to a ladder taken from a nearby orchard, and hurried into the night.

A few kilometres away they found a place of temporary refuge – a barn belonging to an aged farmer who was known to favour the Resistance. In sight of the burning villas, they hid Lees amongst hay bales, promising that help would come. That done the raiders departed, seeking to evade an enraged enemy intent on hunting them down to the last man.

Farran led that epic feat of escape and endurance, one fuelled by Benzedrine ("bennies") a powerful amphetamine which, with its euphoric stimulant effects could keep

*The men of No. 3 Squadron SAS, Spring '45, with jeeps and weaponry used in Northern Italy to mount raids deep behind the lines*



*Image: Damien Lewis*



a man alert for days. Issued as part of the SAS escape kit, they used the bennies to fuel their forced march, popping them like Smarties. But once back in their mountain redoubt, Farran had a pressing issue on his mind: Mike Lees.

At his place of hiding, Lees was weakened by blood-loss and semi-delirious. All around buzzed German ambulances and trucks, taking dead and wounded from the villas, and evacuating what was left of the headquarters. Lees was tended to by members of the female Resistance, risking their lives to bathe and bandage his wounds.

Everywhere enraged German forces hunted for the raiders. At one stage, the barn was searched, but the old farmer managed to convince the searchers no one could be hidden there. "I reflected how lucky I was still to be alive," Lees observed. But he could not remain in that barn, and only the Resistance could save him.

On the morning of 29 March, Antonio, the local Resistance leader, paid a visit. He brought a horse-drawn cart piled high with manure. It proved to have a false bottom. Lees was helped aboard, dark liquid seeping from the thick and oozing load. Despite the extreme discomfort, the carriage proved a stroke of genius – they jolted along tracks thick with the enemy, but none were keen to search the load.

Lees was brought to a safe house. By now his leg appeared to be paralysed, and he could barely move. Fresh dressings, medicines and morphine had been readied – all stolen from a local hospital. Dr Chiesi, a local Italian doctor, paid a visit. A die-hard supporter of the Resistance, he showed little apparent fear of the enemy. But by the time he'd finished inspecting Lees, his expression was grim.

## "HE'D CLAIMED TO HAVE FALLEN OUT OF THE AIRCRAFT, WHEN SEEING HIS MEN OFF, AND JUST HAPPENED TO HAVE A PARACHUTE STRAPPED TO HIS PERSON"

"The nerve in your leg is severed," he announced. "If it is not repaired within ten days it will die completely." "What exactly does that mean?" Lees pressed.

Dr Chiesi explained that without an operation, Lees might never walk again. He might not even survive. He had to get to a hospital. Lees reflected upon his predicament – ten days to save his leg. Paralysed and unable even to stand, it seemed hopeless.

Sometime later a courier arrived, bearing a note from Roy Farran, "Dear Mike ... You don't know how sorry we all are about your rotten luck and will do everything we can to help you escape ... Base have wirelessly to say that if we can prepare a landing ground they will send a light aircraft to fly you out. We can do nothing, however, 'til we know where you are and if you are fit to move."

By "base", Farran meant SOE headquarters, in Florence, lying just to the south of the Gothic Line. By now, Florence HQ had been sent an official casualty report on Lees. It read, "Capt Michael Lees. Wounded on 26 March 1945. 3 Bullets left thigh." Somewhat inaccurate – the fog of war – it did nevertheless record that Lees had been shot multiple times.

It was followed by Farran's desperate plea for help. "Mike's condition critical. Operation essential. Carrying to Palanzano ... Warn Holland and lay on Torch pick up ... Ack when laid on."

Working with the local Resistance, Farran had cooked up a plan to save Lees, one of the most extraordinary and daring rescue missions of the war. Palanzano was the nearest partisan-held village to Lees' present location. Crucially, Palanzano was known to have a tiny, but usable airstrip. "Holland" was Major Charles Holland, the SOE agent local to that area. "Torch" was code for a Fieseler Fi 156 Storch, a single-engine German spotter plane with an unrivalled short take-off and landing capability.

Farran had sent his plea for help early on the morning of 1 April 1945. Lees' survival hung by the slenderest of threads. It relied upon Resistance leader Antonio somehow smuggling him through terrain crawling with the enemy, high into the mountains, so that a former Italian Air Force ace could fly a mission of untold daring, to spirit Lees to safety.

Lieutenant Furio Lauri was credited with 12 Allied kills, including one Lancaster bomber. He'd been shot down twice, once by a Hurricane. He'd been awarded the Order of the German Eagle, amongst numerous other decorations. But upon Italy's 1943 signing of the armistice with the Allies, the clandestine operators had come calling. Lauri had been recruited by SOE to fly covert missions.

Since then, he'd executed a series of breathtaking rescues of downed Allied airmen. Most recently, in February 1945, Lieutenant James of the 12th (US) Air Force had ejected from a



Trainees at Ringway parachute school, prior to joining No. 3 SAS in Italy



SOE Captain Michael Lees (left of picture), disguised in cloak as a local Italian

Heavily armed Italian Partisans parade through liberated territory, 4th May 1945



Images: Damien Lewis



stricken fighter plane. Found by the Resistance, they'd arranged to lift him out for urgent medical attention. Furio Lauri had taken off flying a Storch, the long-legged ungainly German spotter plane now repainted in Allied markings.

Landing in fierce crosswinds on a tiny dirt airstrip, Lauri had managed to damage the aircraft's propeller. The Storch was wheeled behind a barn and covered in branches, so as to hide it. A replacement propeller was carefully wrapped, loaded into a Mitchell B-25's bomb bay, and parachuted into the stranded pilot, whereupon the Storch was repaired. Furio Lauri received a hero's welcome, when he'd flown Lieutenant James to safety.

Both Farran and Lees knew of the Italian pilot's reputation – hence Farran's proposal. Lees grabbed a map. Ten miles across the plains then 20 over the foothills – there lay the remote mountainside airstrip at Palanzano. But how was he to get to it?

Farran had signed off his note, stressing that the 14th Army HQ raid had been "a good night's work and we are preparing for plenty more. The Partisans are in fine fettle. I only wish you were here to lead them". Lees concurred. But right now, it was saving his life that was foremost on his mind.

That evening Antonio came to visit. They discussed the problem. With a wicked grin, Antonio announced that he might have a solution. Lees was to be ready to move early the next morning. Knowing that Lees would never survive such a back-breaking journey hidden under a heap of manure, Antonio had decided to resort to some inspired thievery and bluff.

Desperate times called for desperate measures. Antonio had his men hi-jack a German field ambulance, one of those that

was ferrying the injured to and from hospital. Lees – plus an Italian partisan also injured in the attack – were loaded aboard the square-bodied German military vehicle, iconic red cross symbols emblazoned across its roof and side.

Antonio, dressed in the uniform of a German Army field medic, warned this was only stage one of the journey. Even if they managed to bluff their way across the plains, they could only get so far into the hills using the ambulance. Eventually, Lees would have to transfer into a bullock cart.

As they set forth into the pre-dawn darkness, Lees felt buoyed by hope. But even as that hijacked ambulance rumbled through the streets, so an urgent cypher message winged its way to London. It made clear that even should Lees manage to escape, he was in trouble.

"In a recent engagement Capt Michael Lees rpt Lees wounded in leg as a result of an attack made by him contrary to orders. It is thought possible he may have acted under orders issued by Major Farran of SAS, but matter will be fully investigated on his return."

Just before their departure on the raid, Farran had received an order to stand the mission down. Knowing that he could never again get his piratical band of raiders into the kind of fighting frenzy that was required, and certainly not following such a signal let-down, he'd decided, Nelson-like, to turn a blind eye.

Lees was racked by malaria, and it was Farran who shouldered the burden of denying their orders. Farran wasn't even supposed to be there. Due to past injuries, he was banned from deploying on frontline operations. He'd claimed to have fallen out of the aircraft, when seeing his men off, and just happened to have a parachute strapped to his person. Farran

figured he was facing a court martial anyway, and they couldn't exactly court-martial him twice. But it looked as if Lees was also going to have to face the music.

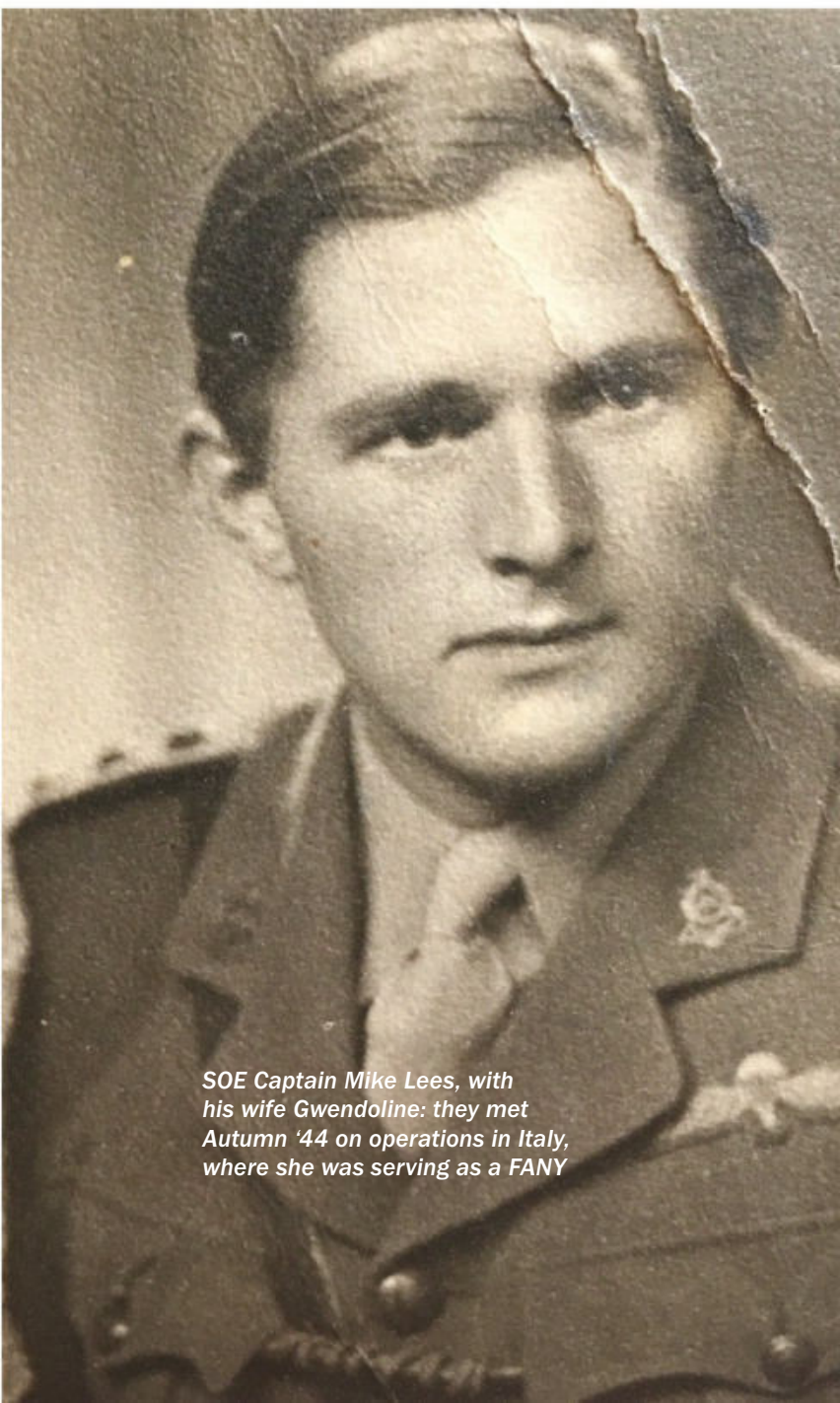
Just as they had hoped, Antonio's ruse with the German ambulance worked wonders, spiriting Lees through checkpoint after checkpoint. Time and again they slowed at the approach of an enemy roadblock, only for the German sentries to wave in greeting and signal them through. Lees was starting to appreciate the advantages of making like the enemy.

An agonising journey three days by bullock cart followed, crawling ever higher into the mountains. Over time it became a blurred kaleidoscope of burning pain, agony and semi-consciousness, as Lees lay on a bed of straw crying out at every lurch. His fevered imagination re-lived the last few months of SOE operations "some of the happiest of my life".

He remembered his January 1945 parachuting into the area, and "running like rabbits frightened by a stoat" before the German rastrellamento (raking-through) an anti-partisan drive. The long weeks that followed "building an army from a rabble". Then had come Hans, the German deserter who'd arrived in their midst, bringing news of the 14 Army headquarters – a prime target.

After that "on the crest of a wave" the arrival of Farran and his SAS, the assault on the two villas and all that had followed. "I thought back over ... the wild music of those pipes and the terrible moment when I could not walk, then those anxious days hiding out in the plains, for the first time in my life helpless and relying on others."

Lees had been "a long trail, always moving, always alert, attacking, escaping, but always



SOE Captain Mike Lees, with his wife Gwendoline: they met Autumn '44 on operations in Italy, where she was serving as a FANY



Fifth Army troops fight their way through Gothic Line, Autumn 1944





No. 3 Squadron SAS together with Molton Stanco - Italian for 'very tired' - the 75mm 'pack howitzer' SAS Major Roy Farran had parachuted in, to take the war to the enemy

preparing for that day ... when, guided by a few British officers, the partisans all over Europe would rise against the enemy". Lees lamented how "on the eve of that day, crippled and useless, I had to withdraw from the game. Hard justice indeed".

Instead, at dawn on 6 April 1945 Lees lay on a stretcher on the edge of a tiny field sliced from the very side of the mountain, above the village of Palanzano. Lain either side of a tiny dirt airstrip were rows of silk parachutes – markers for the pilot. The strip was around 100 yards long by 30 broad, so not a great deal wider than the wingspan of the in-bound aircraft.

At Lees' side squatted a familiar figure – Corporal Phil Butler, who'd served as Lees' right hand man. Working locally as a schoolmaster before the war, learning to speak Italian, Butler had wandered into the mountains and been recruited by SOE. Quiet, charming and with considerable intelligence-savvy, he had trekked across the hills to aid in Lees' rescue, as had Giulio Davidi (war-name "Kiss") one of Lees' partisan commanders.

Lees searched the skies for a tiny, fragile-seeming aircraft. He turned to the pair of them, as ears strained to catch the rumble of an engine at altitude "Any sign?" Lees queried. "No, but it can't be long," Butler replied. "They're due soon after ten. Not long now ... How're you feeling?" "The leg hurts like hell," Lees replied, "otherwise, not too bad ... Give me a hand to sit, will you?"

Butler put an arm around Lees' broad shoulders and helped him into a sitting position. Lees took a moment to admire the view. It was a magnificent morning. North the valley carved around towards the plains, which were thick with a heat haze. South lay the dramatic folds of Mount Cusna ("Uomo Morto", "Dead Man" to the locals) rising to its glistening white snow-cap. There was a cry from Butler, "There it is!"

Sure enough, high above Cusna, a tiny speck hung in the heavens. So slowly it seemed hardly to move, it gained shape and substance. To either side were dart like forms – Mustang fighters, circling protectively around the tiny form of the Storch. Furio Lauri had nursed the aircraft



Italian dignitaries, including 'Gordon', third from left, Italian partisan commander, together with the actual Fieseler Storch aircraft used to rescue Mike Lees

thus far, and was beginning his approach to what appeared to be an impossible landing.

The fuselage appeared improbably spindly and fragile, sandwiched between two ridiculously large, oddly curved wings. Lauri circled over the tiny strip, sizing up what lay below. Lees could see his face gazing out of the cockpit, studying the approach and the terrain.

He passed over, wingtip practically kissing the grass as he banked and dropped from view. Had he aborted the landing, Lees wondered. The ground was rough, and fierce cross-winds sheered across the mountains. The Storch made several approaches, but each time Lauri figured he couldn't quite land.

Finally, the engine note changed, from a murmur, it became a roar, the noise echoing up from below. Suddenly, the Storch reappeared, rearing up just a few feet above the end of the strip, where it hovered motionless for a second, before touching down. It rumbled to a bumpy stop, an incredible feat of airmanship.

Eager hands rushed Lees aboard. Lauri sat at the controls, engine running. The cockpit was cramped and Lauri had to struggle to get the parachute strapped to Lees' body. Figures crowded the doorway – partisans wishing good luck, as Lees shouted words of farewell.

The partisans took hold of the wings and lifted the tail, Lauri bringing the engine up to full power, dropping his hand to signal release. The Storch began to bump across the strip.

Moments later the aircraft dipped over the edge and plummeted into the abyss. For a long moment Lees feared they were done for, but then the wings gained lift, the nose lurched violently upwards, and they soared away.

Major Charles Holland, the SOE man on the ground, would refer to that airstrip as Mike Lees' "tennis lawn ... The pick-up took place on a flat 100yd spur with a sheer drop on three sides. The Storch had great difficulty landing ... Lauri deserves a medal ... He made five attempts each one more dangerous than the last."

It was 11.00am on 6 April 1945 when the Storch began the long climb to overfly the snow-bound heights of Cusna, the Mustangs buzzing and swooping protectively. Hours later, Lees was admitted to a general military hospital, in Florence, before being transferred to a similar facility in Rome. His life, and his legs, had been saved.

"The war came while I was still young and inexperienced in human nature," Lees would write of this time. "I was dumb enough to believe that everybody else was motivated by a simple and straightforward desire to get on with the war ... I was a tough guerrilla leader, but stupid to a degree in dealing with staff at Base; perhaps we didn't tick the same way."

To what degree Lees and the staff didn't "tick" was shortly to be demonstrated, as the witch hunt gathered pace. But for now, in the memory of Mike Lees, his partisans were to spread chaos and havoc behind the enemy's front, helping break the spirit of the Gothic Line defenders.

Just days later the Gothic Line would fall, with almost a million German troops surrendering complete with their equipment. On 4 May 1945 the German's unconditional surrender was signed in Italy and the war there was over.



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# DE HAVILLAND

The Royal Navy's distinctive twin-boom jet fighter saw operations in several 'brush fire wars' of the 1950s and 60s

**T**he de Havilland DH110 was a twin-engined, two-seat, twin-boom strike fighter, designed to a series of late 1940s Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm requirements for a night-fighter. After a lengthy development period (which included redesign after a tragic air show crash) the FAA adopted the aircraft as the Sea Vixen Fighter (All Weather) in 1955.

The basic design was adjusted for carrier operations, and to allow the aircraft to act in a fighter or a ground attack role. It became the Royal Navy's first integrated weapon system, with a versatile range of rockets, missiles and bombs, but was the first British naval aircraft since the First World War not to have internal guns.

The Sea Vixen F(AW)1 entered service in 1959, and was followed by the improved F(AW)2 in 1964. A total of 145 were built, and although it only saw limited combat and none was lost to enemy action, the dangers of carrier-borne operations saw 55 aircraft lost to accidents. Replaced in 1972 by the McDonnell Douglas Phantom, various airframes were kept for flying and ground training and development roles into the 1990s.

*The Sea Vixen has a highly distinctive shape*



## THE COAL HOLE

The cockpit layout of the Vixen makes it instantly identifiable, with the pilot off-set from the centre and the observer sitting below and to one side.



# SEA VIXEN

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

## DE HAVILLAND SEA VIXEN F(AW)1

COMMISSIONED:	1955
ORIGIN:	BRITISH
LENGTH:	16.94M (53FT 6.5IN)
WINGSPAN:	15.54M (51FT)
RANGE:	1,270KM (790ML) ON INTERNAL TANKS
ENGINE:	2 X 44KN (10,000LBF) ROLLS ROYCE AVON MK. 208 TURBOJETS
CREW:	2
PRIMARY WEAPON:	4 X FIRESTREAK AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES, 4 X 500LB BOMBS, 2 X MICROCELL 2-INCH ROCKET PACKS

### SHORT AND LOW

The twin boom allowed the tail to be shorter and lower, making it more suited to storage in the confines of an aircraft carrier.

### TRIPLE FLAPS

The shape of the wing led to a system of three flaps on each one, to maximise control.

### RANGE EXTENDER

With air-to-air refuelling, Sea Vixens could stay airborne for eight hours. 'Buddy packs' were fitted to allow Sea Vixens to act as tankers.

Right: A Sea Vixen  
on board HMS  
Victorious, 1959

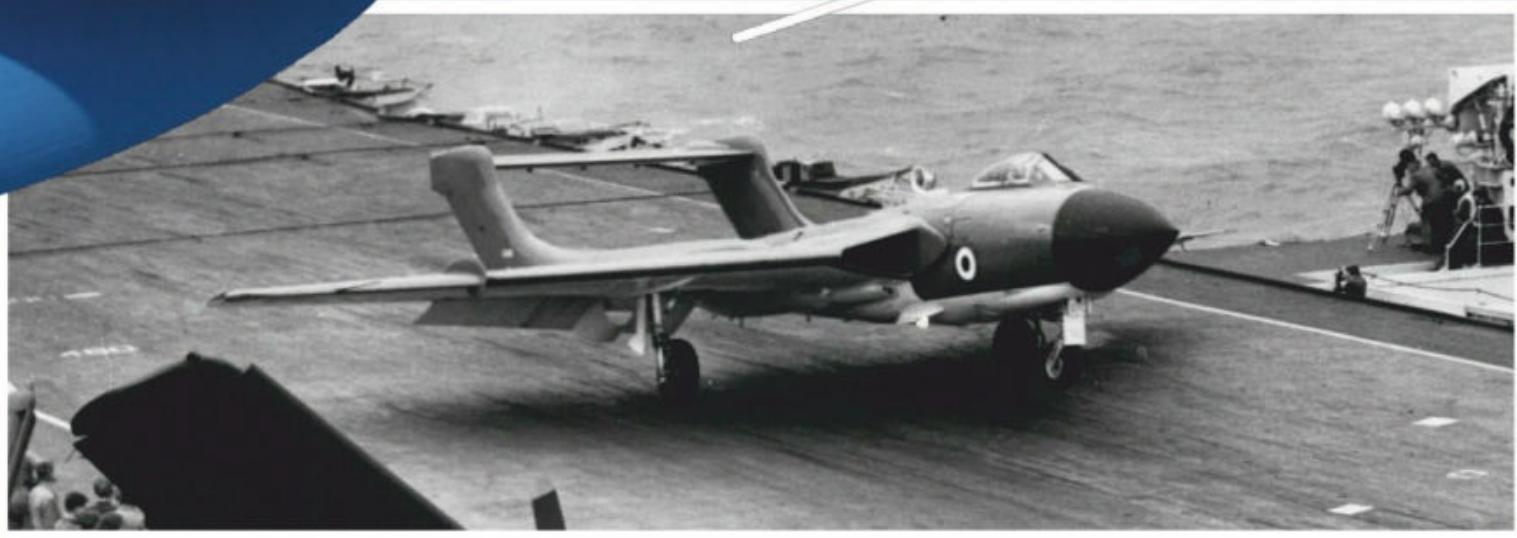


Illustration: Alex Pang



A Sea Vixen being refuelled from another, 1962



## DESIGN

The Sea Vixen had a highly distinctive and sturdy design. The cockpit layout gave it a bulbous nose with an off-set canopy, while the twin tail boom allowed the tail to be shorter and lower. For naval operations, the original DH110 was modified with folding wings, tail hook, steerable nose wheel, and catapult fixture points under the wings. The stressed metal frame included a pressurised cockpit. 'Buddy packs' could be carried allow Sea Vixens to refuel other aircraft, while on the F(AW)2 the wings and tail booms were enlarged, allowing greatly increased fuel storage.



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The Sea Vixen represents the zenith of De Havilland's twin boom jet design philosophy. An all-weather fighter, the two-seat Sea Vixen was a capable design that served as a drone after its retirement from frontline service. Airfix's new de Havilland Sea Vixen FAW.2 model kit is due for release in 2019 and this issue one History of War reader will be among the first people to get their hands on a copy. For more information, please visit [www.airfix.com](http://www.airfix.com).



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"FOR NAVAL OPERATIONS, THE ORIGINAL  
DH110 WAS MODIFIED WITH FOLDING  
WINGS, TAIL HOOK, STEERABLE  
NOSE WHEEL, & CATAPULT FIXTURE  
POINTS UNDER THE WINGS"

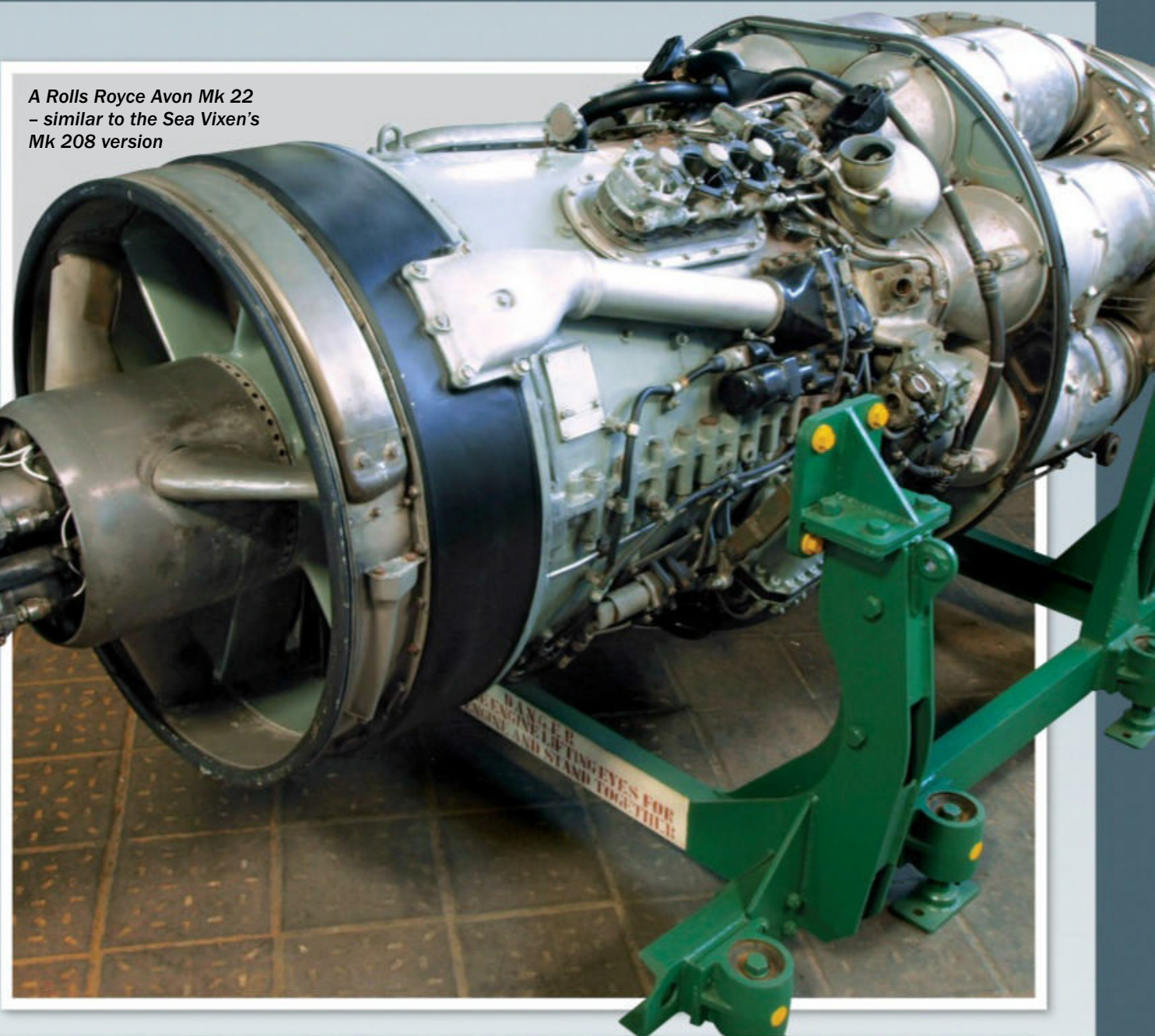
The Sea Vixen was built to be compact, to allow easy storage on aircraft carriers



## ENGINE

While the DH110 had been powered by two 32.69kN (7,350lbf) thrust Rolls Royce Avon Ra.7s axial-flow turbo-jets, the production Sea Vixen had upgraded Avon Mk. 208s with 50kN (11,000lbf) thrust. A great step forward from the earlier Ra.7, the Mk. 208s had a new combustion section and a 15-stage compressor. They gave the Sea Vixen just-subsonic speed in level flight, an impressive rate of climb, and a high ceiling. They had an endurance of 3,220 km (2,000 miles), or greater with air-to-air refuelling.

A Rolls Royce Avon Mk 22  
- similar to the Sea Vixen's  
Mk 208 version



The twin-engines  
of the Sea Vixen

A Sea Vixen  
escorts a  
Soviet Tu-16  
Badger, 1968



## ARMAMENT

The F(AW)1 was equipped with four de Havilland Firestreak air-to-air missiles and two batteries of 28 folding-fin unguided 5cm (2in) rockets. Four 227kg (500lb) bombs could also be carried, or additional air-to-air rockets in Microcell Anti-Aircraft Rocket batteries. On the F(AW)2, the Firesteaks were replaced by Hawker Siddeley Red Tops. These delivered a 31kg (68lb) warhead at Mach 3.2 at 12km (7.5 mile) range. Unfortunately, the infra-red seeker head did not work in cloud. The F(AW)2 could also carry a heavier bomb load, and air-to-ground rockets.

Right: The first  
photograph of  
the "Firestreak"  
air-to-air missile.  
The photograph  
was taken  
by a camera  
mounted on  
the wing of the  
parent aircraft





“THE OBSERVER ACTED MORE AS NAVIGATOR AND WEAPONS OPERATOR, USING THE INSTRUMENTS DOWN IN HIS ‘COAL HOLE’ TO ADVISE THE PILOT”



COCKPIT

The cockpit of the Sea Vixen was an awkward design. The two crew sat side-by-side, with the observer below the pilot on his right. This put the canopy and pilot off-centre, and gave the observer almost no visibility. In fact, the observer acted more as navigator and weapons operator, using the instruments down in his ‘coal hole’ to advise the pilot. Both had ejector seats, but the small size of the F(AW)1s hatch above the observer made ejecting difficult, a problem rectified on the F(AW)2.

The cramped and crowded cockpit of the Sea Vixen was not very user friendly



A Sea Vixen comes in to land on a carrier, 1965



## SERVICE HISTORY

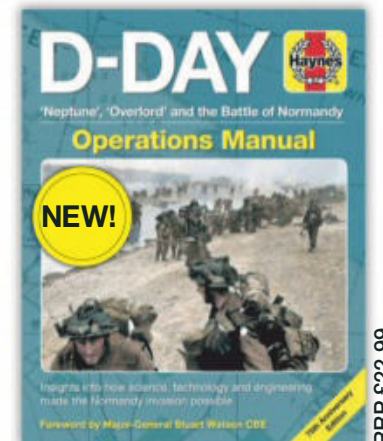
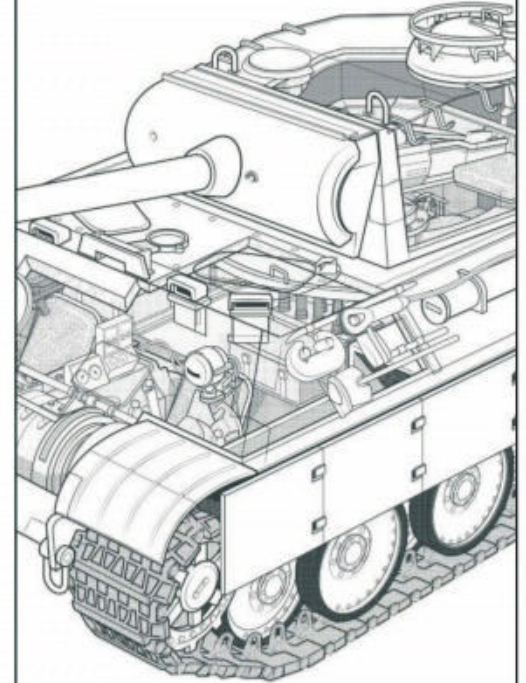
The Sea Vixen began trials with the Fleet Air Arm in November 1958, and entered front line service with No. 892 Naval Air Squadron the following July. All four Sea Vixen squadrons (Nos. 890, 892, 894 and 899) were based at RNAS Yeovilton, and they deployed at various times on five aircraft carriers – HMSs Ark Royal, Centaur, Eagle, Hermes and Victorious. A total of 145 Sea Vixens were built, 29 of them as improved F(AW)2s, while 67 F(AW)1s were also upgraded.

They saw service around the world, participating in several of Britain's 'brush fire wars' of the 1960s. They deployed to Kuwait in 1961 to deter Iraqi aggression, and covered the final withdrawal from Aden in 1967. A particularly busy year was 1964, when HMS Centaur deployed to Tanganyika in 1964 to help free the High Commissioner, flew operations over the Rafdan, and then steamed to Indonesia to help stabilise the 'confrontation'. The last Sea Vixen left front line service in 1972.

Above: A Sea Vixen sweeps over troops exercising on Salisbury Plain, 1966



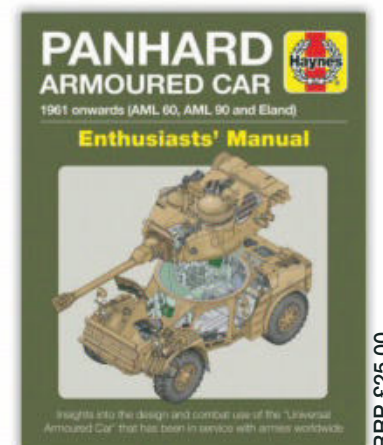
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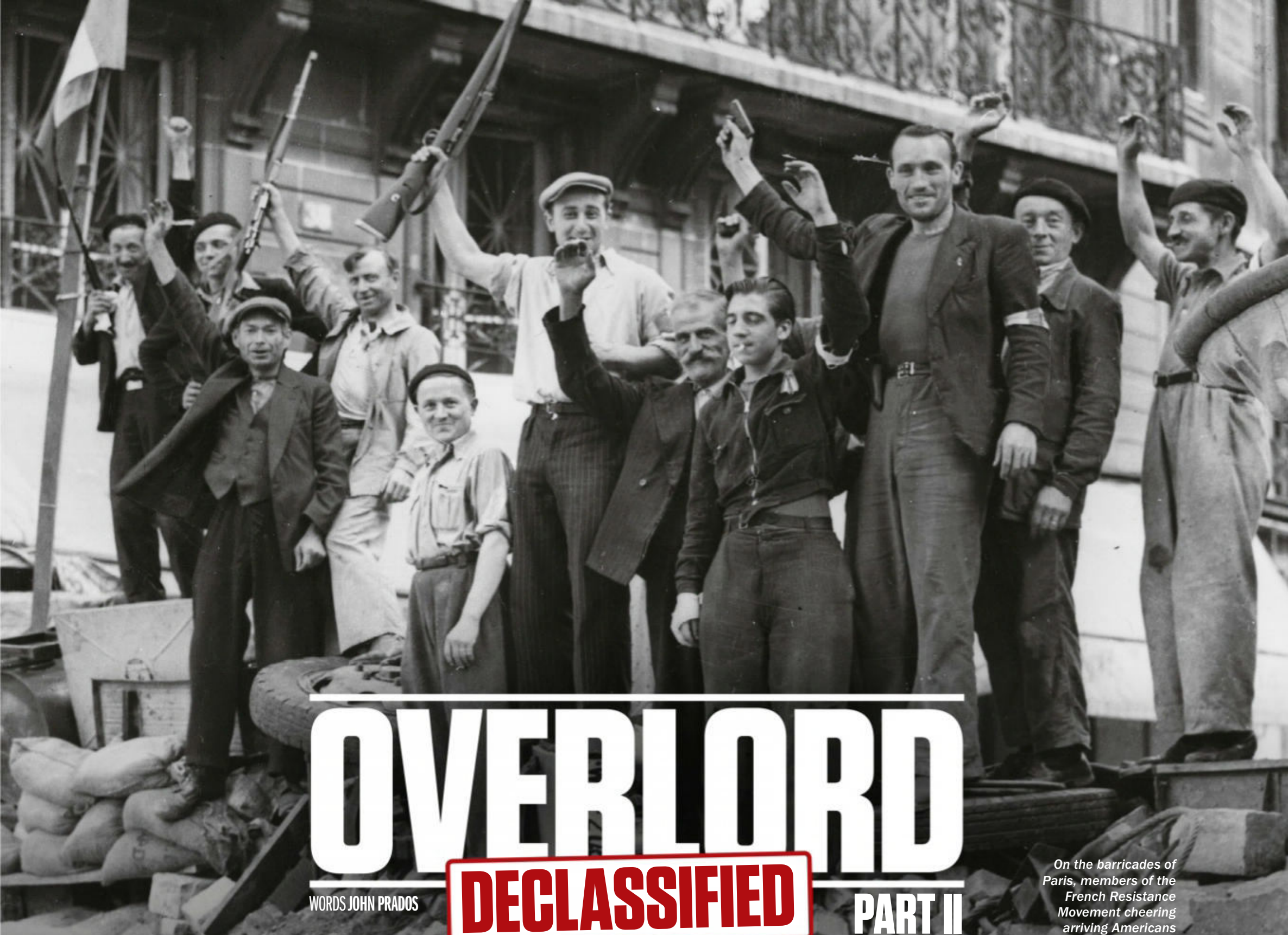


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# OVERLORD

WORDS JOHN PRADOS

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**PART II**

*On the barricades of Paris, members of the French Resistance Movement cheering arriving Americans*

With the invasion of occupied Europe looming, the Office of Strategic Services continued preparing for the operation behind enemy lines by setting up reinforcements and support for Resistance sabotage missions

**S**HAEF assumed a larger role in the intelligence war from early 1944, with General Eisenhower taking control of all D-Day-related intelligence activities on 23 March. The consolidation was similar to what happened in Algiers. The French undertook a merger of their Resistance forces into the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) under General Pierre Koenig. In addition the Committee for National Liberation named delegates to the various Resistance zones. The alliance remained shaky because the French sides viewed each other warily, while, on the ground, the communists and some other independent French networks did not join the FFI.

Meanwhile, Joe Haskell of SO/London, plus the SOE, formed a Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ) about five weeks before D-Day. SFHQ took control of all operations out of England and maintained a War Room dedicated to clandestine activities. On 20 May the overlords of the secret war met at SFHQ to make their final invasion arrangements.

Air delivery – of operatives, agents, teams, commandos – made it all possible. It made sense to have air units focused on secret operations, but the Eighth Air Force, the US Army Air Force (USAAF) strategic bomber command in Europe, resisted diverting aircraft to this effort, as it saw them as secondary tasks. Having lost 60 of its 337 bombers (a loss rate of 18 per cent) in the 17 August 1943 raids on Schweinfurt and Regensburg, Eighth felt it needed every plane. For example, reassigning just two squadrons (36 aircraft) to secret operations at that moment would have diverted eight per cent of the Eighth Air Force's total capacity.

However aircraft production in the US was increasing and secret war requirements had to be met. Haskell produced a paper on October 12 outlining how an air bridge would aid the Resistance. Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, then the senior American officer in England, approved a two-squadron commitment. USAAF had some B-24s that had been flying anti-submarine missions and lacked oxygen systems

and other equipment for strategic bombing. Using these planes for the secret war seemed feasible. Colonel Clifford J. Heflin and his deputy, Major Robert W. Fish, met Haskell and other OSS officers at the base RAF Bovington on 24 October. From a list of approved codenames the airmen chose "Carpetbaggers".

Heflin and some of his 12th Anti-Submarine Squadron pilots moved to RAF Tempsford to tag along on British missions. On the night of 3/4 November one of the RAF planes went down with Captain James E. Estes, who became the first Carpetbagger casualty.

RAF Harrington became the centre for Heflin's flight activity, which included a makeshift OSS packing facility to prepare the loads for shipment. These B-24 bombers were modified for Carpetbagger work – painted black, with a black gloss to reduce the radar signature. In addition, the planes' instrument panels were repositioned in front of the pilots' eyes, to prioritise those gauges most important to low-level flight. There were also extra navigation aids fitted, flame arresters over the engine exhausts,





*Supplies for the maquis during the Battle of France float to earth after leaving the bomb bays of 8th US Air Force B-17 Flying Fortresses*

muzzle masks for machine guns, and more. The planes were stripped of armour, nose and some waist guns, and given extra lift capacity. The most critical modification would be removal of the bottom ball turret, replaced by a hole – soon called the “Joe” hole – from which operatives would parachute.

A typical Carpetbagger mission began the previous afternoon, when the Air Operations desk, OSS/London, used a scrambler phone to notify approved targets. First thing in the morning, Heflin or Fish huddled with meteorologists to decide which missions were practicable. The final list would be sent to the OSS liaison at Harrington as soon as it was ready. Before noon, Heflin summoned squadron commanders to hand out targets. Navigators started planning routes about noontime, while at mid-afternoon navigators turned over their flight plans for review, while crews gathered for an overview from Fish, a brief by squadron intel officers and weather predictions from the meteorologists. OSS liaison ensured each aircraft had the correct load, while SO/London officers escorted the Joes (female agents were called Janes) until they boarded the plane.

The Carpetbaggers had unusual prerogatives by USAAF standards. Group commanders in the Eighth Air Force could not refuse missions, but from 9 April 1944, Heflin could do so. Pilots were authorised to terminate flights until just before the drop point. Crewmen could refuse any mission without consequence. For all that, the men of the 801st Bombardment Group (Provisional) often flew in weather where the Eighth Air Force stayed on the ground. The command and the operational units (36th and 406th squadrons) all shared the flying duty and it was dangerous. On 5 April 1944 a Carpetbagger B-24 succumbed to German flak crossing the French coast. Six of the eight-man crew were lost. On 27/28 April, another B-24 hit its wing on a tree, killing five of eight. Exactly

a month later the Germans caught a B-24 in a trap over Belgium, where flak and a night-fighter combined to blow it out of the sky. USAAF records show that between March and June 1944, nine Carpetbagger aircraft were lost on missions and three more operationally, with 91 airmen lost.

After a first mission on 4 January 1944, Carpetbagger activity became constant. Between then and March the group flew 142 missions, 69 successfully completed. They delivered 810 containers, and 267 packages of supplies, for 133 tons. But that paled next to the pre-D-Day months of April and May. In April alone Carpetbaggers delivered 223 tons, in May 301.

The flow of Joes started with two operatives in March but really picked up in May, when the Carpetbaggers flew 40 spies to the continent. The redoubtable spies Ernest Floege and André Bouchardon returned to France on 6 May, delivered by Carpetbagger Flight 373.

## “SABOTAGE BECAME BIG BUSINESS IN THE MONTHS BEFORE D-DAY”

The air bridge added unmistakable value, which General Donovan did not miss. In the spring of 1944 he pressed for more planes and that February SO/London’s Haskell told Donovan that the British special operations airlift put the Americans to shame. Wild Bill then sent USAAF leaders a paper advocating two or three more Carpetbagger-type squadrons for Europe (plus additional aircraft for the Mediterranean). Even the State Department got into the act, informing USAAF that the emerging French government might interpret meagre US support for the Resistance as an unfriendly act. On 2 May, General Eisenhower ordered the

Eighth Air Force to increase the Carpetbagger force by two additional squadrons. Re-designated the 492nd Bombardment Group, Colonel Heflin’s Carpetbaggers would have 64 aircraft to support the invasion of France.

Meanwhile General Eisenhower pressed for more concerted plans. In early 1944 SOE/SO had obliged, crafting a set of plans targeting 1,188 rail facilities, 30 road bridges, and 32 telecommunications sites. The plans (“Green” for railroads, “Blue” for electric production, “Violet” for communications, “Tortoise” for bridges and roads) could be activated by broadcasting innocent-sounding messages on the BBC. One umbrella message, alerting the Resistance to the invasion, would mobilise all forces. The high command even carried out experiments – in mid-January, for example, ordering widespread Resistance strikes on the French rail net to gauge its capacity for Plan Green. SFHQ created a map estimating local readiness for rail attacks nationwide.

Specific targets during these missions were always controversial. William J. Casey, chief of Bruce’s executive secretariat at OSS/London, remembers how the Economic Objectives Unit, another joint entity between the British Board of Economic Warfare and OSS/R&A (which had acquired a reputation for calling good targets for strategic bombing), advocated knocking out bridges as the way to stall German rail transport. Solly Zuckerman, a British scientist (as well as a central figure in applying the quasi-mathematical method called operations research), favoured bombing rail yards. Zuckerman – who fought fiercely against the air generals to get bombers taken from strategic bombing to devote to the invasion, insists he did view bridges as prime targets. SHAEF added the bridges to the target list a month ahead of the invasion. Planners cut back the rail sabotage plan to 1,050 targets – Resistance bands attacked all but a hundred of them.



Sabotage became big business in the months before D-Day. One of several standard cargo loads for Carpetbaggers contained 145 or 290 pounds of plastic explosive (depending on the number of containers). Factories and power plants, electric grid elements like pylons, telephone or telegraph lines, and rail locomotives became favourite maquis prey. A bridge could be dropped with as little as 200lbs of explosives. A factory could be crippled by surreptitious revisions to a blueprint. During six months through June, SFHQ supervised 50 major sabotage operations, three times as many as SOE had accomplished since 1941. According to OSS raconteur Casey, all that required just 1.5 tons of explosives.

By far the most strategic OSS operation – and the most aggressive too – would be SFHQ's move into the Brittany peninsula. Here the mission actually started with the French – alongside the invasion, SFHQ sent troopers of the 4th Special Air Service (SAS) battalion to Brittany, which was actually a French special operations unit, with four additional SAS parties to follow (mostly British troopers). OSS took a hand on 9/10 June, sending two Jedburgh teams. Pitched battles with German occupiers began on 12 June. Partisans welled up in Brittany, bringing appeals for OSS weapons. German troops up to battalion strength actually surrendered to OSS teams during these missions. Jed teams Frederick and George became the first of seven inserted before the end of July, when US troops broke out of Normandy and entered Brittany. In August, SFHQ committed another Jed team plus some agents. Before the campaign ended, 30,000 partisans had mobilised.

Secret service commanders worried the Resistance might telegraph its intentions or, worse, provoke the Germans to break up networks or maquis groups just when these became critical to invasion strategy. This nearly happened. Kept in the dark about D-Day, the FFI planned a show of force. The maquis would clear and hold an area in central or south France, French paratroops could join to stiffen the defences, then representatives of the provisional government would appear, giving DeGaulle's government its first presence on French soil. The plan changed, and its focus moved from central France, and then was cancelled. But in central France, Colonel Emile Coulondon (nom de guerre Gaspard), went ahead anyway. SI/London, or at least Bill Casey, thought Gaspard was running an independent fiefdom. But the maquis leader engaged seriously with a team from Buckmaster's F Section, and with the agent who led Stationer, one of the biggest SOE networks in southern France.

Gaspard met the Stationer chief to concert action in mid-April. Afterward the agent, Maurice Southgate, asked London to supply arms, which it did, along with an SOE agent team. Gaspard called in local maquis leaders and they selected several assembly points: basically back country strongholds. On 8/9 May BCRA dispatched an inter-Allied mission, Benjoin, to Gaspard, just in time because Nazi security arrested agent Southgate. On 10/11 May Gaspard received a big arms shipment. A week later the SOE and BCRA teams met and both agreed to work with the maquis, though Gaspard showed clear preference for SOE. The Resistance chief already had a permanent force of a couple thousand, but after 20 May posted

calls to general mobilisation on town halls in the Auvergne region. OSS was aghast at the breach of secrecy. Indeed they raced with Nazi security. On 27 May the Nazis arrested another top Resistance figure.

Several thousand more men responded to Gaspard's call. His first camp filled up and others had to be activated. There were 28 Carpetbagger flights – mostly British – between 26 May and 9 June. If the Germans had not been tipped off by the mobilisation, they certainly were by the air activity. On 1 June General Fritz von Brodowski, of the German regional staff 588, asked for reinforcements to fight the Resistance. The next day a battalion of 800 SS were repulsed when they attacked. Brodowski got his reinforcements.

A column of 5,000 German troops, including flak units, SS Police, and eastern battalions, drove Gaspard out of his first stronghold and then others. But the fighting extended late into June. London and Algiers committed three Jedburgh teams plus OG Emily to this fray. Group Emily blasted a couple of important bridges and sabotaged 28 locomotives, incapacitating the Toulouse-to-Paris rail line.

Resistance actions for the most part did not take place in the landing zone. Not only were Allied leaders preoccupied elsewhere, such as by the antics of Gaspard, but Nazi security kept on its toes. German counterintelligence broke up the Rouen network Salesman, the Normandy network Donkeyman, and an SOE group around Bordeaux. Ironically, among the most active groups on the Calvados (Normandy) coast was the communist FTP. SOE and FTP-related groups were particularly effective in the Lisieux area, east of Caen. This was a node on the



*A French woman, stepping forward from jeering crowd, curses a captured German soldier who is being marched through town at gunpoint by member of the French Resistance*



Germans' northern reinforcement route. It was on 10 June, to the north, above the Seine, that the Nazis trapped Violette Szabo, a famous female operative, who would be executed at Ravensbrück on 26 January 1945.

Possibly the best-known Resistance action after D-Day took place to the south. This was the maquis effort to delay the 2nd SS Panzer Division's move from Montauban to the combat zone. A trip estimated to require three days consumed 17. Elements of the division got mixed up in the fight against Gaspard's maquisards, had to recapture Tulle from the FTP on 9 June, and then engaged in horrid reprisals, especially at Oradour-sur-Glane the next day, where SS troops herded 642 women and children into a church and then burned it atop their heads.

OSS/London could do little to impede the 2nd SS Panzers directly. SFHQ put a Jed team, Ian, below the Loire on 20/21 June, but that came late in the game. Supplies to the Resistance lifted all maquis efforts. June 1944 was the first month the new Carpetbagger squadrons flew, and their help showed. Colonel Heflin's retitled 492nd Bombardment Group deposited 64 Joes on the continent and delivered 401 tons of supplies, one-third more than the previous month. This increase, while welcome, hardly matched the need. Many maquisards who had guns possessed few or no bullets, others had nothing at all. The FFI worried that, instead of an uprising, they were about to witness the slaughter of the Resistance. On 10 June FFI commander General Koenig ordered a cutback in operations, citing the impossibility of supplying them.

That same day began a sequence of events in the Vercors, the mountains overlooking

the Rhone valley just west of Grenoble, which illuminated Koenig's concerns. At the Saint-Nizier pass the FFI kept an observation post perfect for watching traffic into and out of the city. The day of Koenig's instruction, two companies of German infantry attacked it. The outgunned maquisards held on long enough for partisans to arrive, beating back the enemy.

A few days later the Germans returned, outnumbering the partisans five to one. They broke into Saint-Nizier and burned it down. General Karl Pflaum of the 157th Reserve Division then organised Operation Bettina. He retrained troops – 13 infantry battalions, one of tanks from the 9th Panzer Division and one airborne – forming them into mobile columns, with night exercises and instruction in camouflage. The Germans brought up armour and put 70 aircraft at a nearby field. Bettina even featured paratroops in a glider assault. Pflaum deployed 11,000 soldiers for the Vercors operation. One oddity was that the Luftwaffe, despite complete Allied control of the air, could act with impunity.

Frenchmen thumbed their noses at the Germans on 3 July, when the regional delegate of the Committee of National Liberation declared that the French Republic had been restored. By this time the secret warriors had taken a hand – the inter-Allied team Eucalyptus and the OG Justine were both in Vercors before the end of June. The OG troopers began training the partisans, whose French commander, in conjunction with declaration of the republic, decided to militarise.

The German Army Group G, responsible for southern France issued final orders for Bettina the next day. Resistance leaders declared a

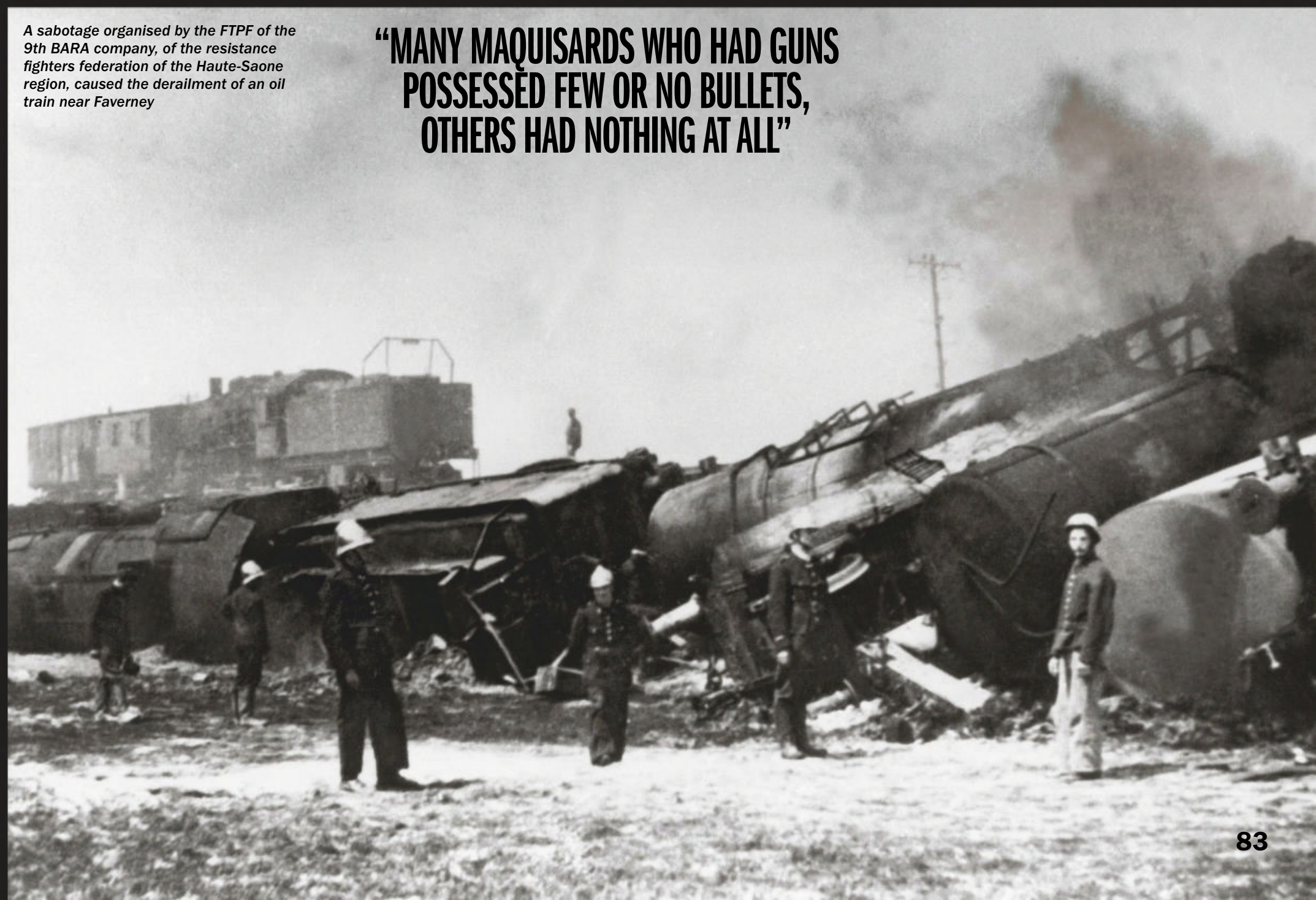
mobilisation on 11 July. A thousand Frenchmen joined the ranks while another 600 helped clear a landing strip.

By this time, Carpetbagger operations were changing. As Allied forces expanded their lodgement and the Resistance began to have cleared areas demands for aircraft landings, not just parachute drops, rose. Colonel Heflin's squadrons traded in some of their B-24s for C-47 transports, meaning it became crucial to figure out how much runway a C-47 needed. Captain Wilmer R. Stapel made "touch-and-go" landings outside Harrington, as many as 20 a day, to establish the short landing requirements. Stapel flew co-pilot alongside Heflin on the night of 6/7 July when the Carpetbaggers carried a sabotage team to a point near the Swiss border. OSS officer Owen D. Johnson met the plane, which partisans camouflaged. Crewmen stayed two-and-a-half days before flying back. By late August, when the Carpetbaggers began regular C-47 operations, they would have four planes which, in a month, delivered 78 Joes and 52 tons of supplies, returning with 213 passengers plus mail to send home.

The flight was important as an observation of the little corner of France where the Luftwaffe held sway. The idea of using a massive daylight lift by regular bombers to succour the Resistance became the next innovation. The Heflin C-47 flight checked German defence capabilities and the day after he returned, Heflin briefed Colonel Bruce. USAAF had planned a lift, called Operation Cadillac, for France's Bastille Day, 14 July and Vercors came first among six drop zones. Some 72 B-17s dropped 1,457 containers. In London, David Bruce and Clifford Heflin lunched with Eighth Air Force commander General Carl Spaatz.

*A sabotage organised by the FTPF of the 9th BARA company, of the resistance fighters federation of the Haute-Saone region, caused the derailment of an oil train near Faverney*

**"MANY MAQUISARDS WHO HAD GUNS POSSESSED FEW OR NO BULLETS, OTHERS HAD NOTHING AT ALL"**





## OVERLORD: DECLASSIFIED PART 2

*Robert Capa (left) and Ernest Hemingway (right) with their US Army driver. They are waiting to follow an American armoured unit into action near Mont Bocard, France, 30 July 1944*



What they did not know about was German countermeasures. The Luftwaffe immediately bombed and strafed the drop zone. Precious few supplies (200 containers) were recovered. By 16 July nearby Vassieux lay in ruins.

General Pflaum's Bettina had been intended for 21 July, but after the mass airdrop the Germans accelerated their attack. Mobile columns immediately began pressing the perimeters of the Resistance base area. On 17 July fighting flared. Lieutenant Andrew E. Pecquet, the OSS radioman for the Eucalyptus mission, furnished what information London got from the Vercors. Next day the maquis leader declared martial law. Two days later the Germans staged a glider assault at Vassieux and the maquis airfield outside it. The gliders disgorged 200 tough paratroopers. German losses were heavy – a quarter the first day – and on the 20 July rain kept away reinforcements, but the next day another 250 paratroops joined the battle. OG Justine along with 75 maquisards attempted a counterattack.

Automatic weapons fire and Luftwaffe strafing drove them off. The Germans landed a high capacity flak gun that blew away maquis positions even as the mobile columns made their way up the plateau.

At mid-afternoon, 23 July, Resistance leader François Huet ordered the partisans to disperse. The Eucalyptus team split up. Pecquet hid the radio equipment in a cave and used his fluent French to disguise himself. The British officers evaded with a party of four partisans. When the group split, a German patrol caught the others, who were executed horribly. The Brits and one maquisard, gone to look for water, pushed ahead to Switzerland. Meanwhile the OSS Operational Group marched into the mountains too. They actually played cat and mouse with the Germans until after the mid-August Anvil-Dragon invasion. Once the Germans fled, OG Justine entered Grenoble on 24 August. The OSSers finally connected with US troops.

While the sides played contended in Vercors, the Allies finally broke out of Normandy.

General George S. Patton's US Third Army benefitted from the SFHQ offensive campaign in Brittany. Patton cut back the force he sent into Brittany to a single corps, and those troops moved like lightning, their way smoothed by the Resistance. Other Third Army troops completed the encirclement of the Germans in Normandy and exploited into the French interior.

OSS again came to Patton's aid with Lieutenant Colonel Robert I. Powell's Special Operations Field Detachment 11. Each US army had one of these detachments, which linked with FFI bands to create auxiliary forces to shield the Americans' far flanks. Some 2,500 to 7,000 partisans served here, and as the French campaign went on, as many as 25,000 FFI joined up.

With the breakout, the Allies finally aimed directly at Paris. The Free French 2nd Armoured Division raced American troops for the French capital. On 7 August Colonel Bruce plus aides left England for the continent. He circuited the top headquarters, the armies, and his various OSS commands. The first sally into the interior, after visiting Third Army, was to Rennes, at the base of Brittany. They saw the Germans under siege at St Malo, which would surrender a few days later. Bruce moved inland to Le Mans, which had fallen on 9 August but was already a backwater, such was the speed of the Allied advance. He encountered one of the Sussex agents, as well as several operatives SI/London had positioned to infiltrate German lines. By 20 August the OSS at Le Mans were expecting Wild Bill Donovan's arrival – he wanted to be on the scene too. The US V Corps took Chartres on 17 August – and next day Colonel Bruce decided to move there. Now the OSS had reached the Paris region and it was not long before Bruce decided to make his way there.

With two OSS aides Colonel Bruce drove to Rambouillet on 20 August. It became his launch pad for Paris, and a focal point for British and French operatives too. Bruce spent several days there. Soon the Rambouillet area swarmed with soldiers of the French division.

On 24 August Bruce followed a column of the French 2nd Armoured toward Paris. One of his aides, Lieutenant John Mowinckel – a Donovan favourite – split off to make a separate sally. Mowinckel encountered no opposition, briefly visited the headquarters of the German commander, General Dietrich von Choltitz, and ended up at a convent the British Secret Intelligence Service had chosen for its Paris command post.

There is a famous story about how writer Ernest Hemingway "liberated" the bar at the Hotel Ritz. "Papa" Hemingway had lived in Paris as a young man, and another author, F. Scott Fitzgerald, introduced him to the Ritz. Hemingway, right now, had become a war correspondent barrelling across France with his own entourage and a group of partisans. Colonel Bruce found Hemingway at Rambouillet. Papa, fixing to march on the Ritz, went with Bruce. Every house was decorated with flags, every village road lined with people. It was impossible to refuse the drinks being thrust at them everywhere. Bruce wrote that during the afternoon of 24 August they had beer, cider, white and red Bordeaux, white and red Burgundy, champagne, rum, whiskey, cognac, Armagnac, and Calvados – and that was before they got to Paris.

The Bruce-Hemingway troupe entered from the western side the next morning. They halted at several places for suspected German snipers, and at others for celebrations, always marked with champagne. Late that day the troupe reached the Hotel Ritz. According to legend, Hemingway burst in to proclaim it liberated, only to be stopped by the manager, longtime friend Claude Auzello, who said Papa could not enter the hotel with a gun. Hemingway stashed the gun, went to the Ritz bar, and demanded 51 martinis. OSS chief Bruce recorded, "We ordered the martinis – not very good because the bartender had left – but the dinner was superb and Bruce arranged for everyone to stay at the Ritz." This OSS campaign ended in a very French way.



# FREQUENT VISITS TO THE BATHROOM?

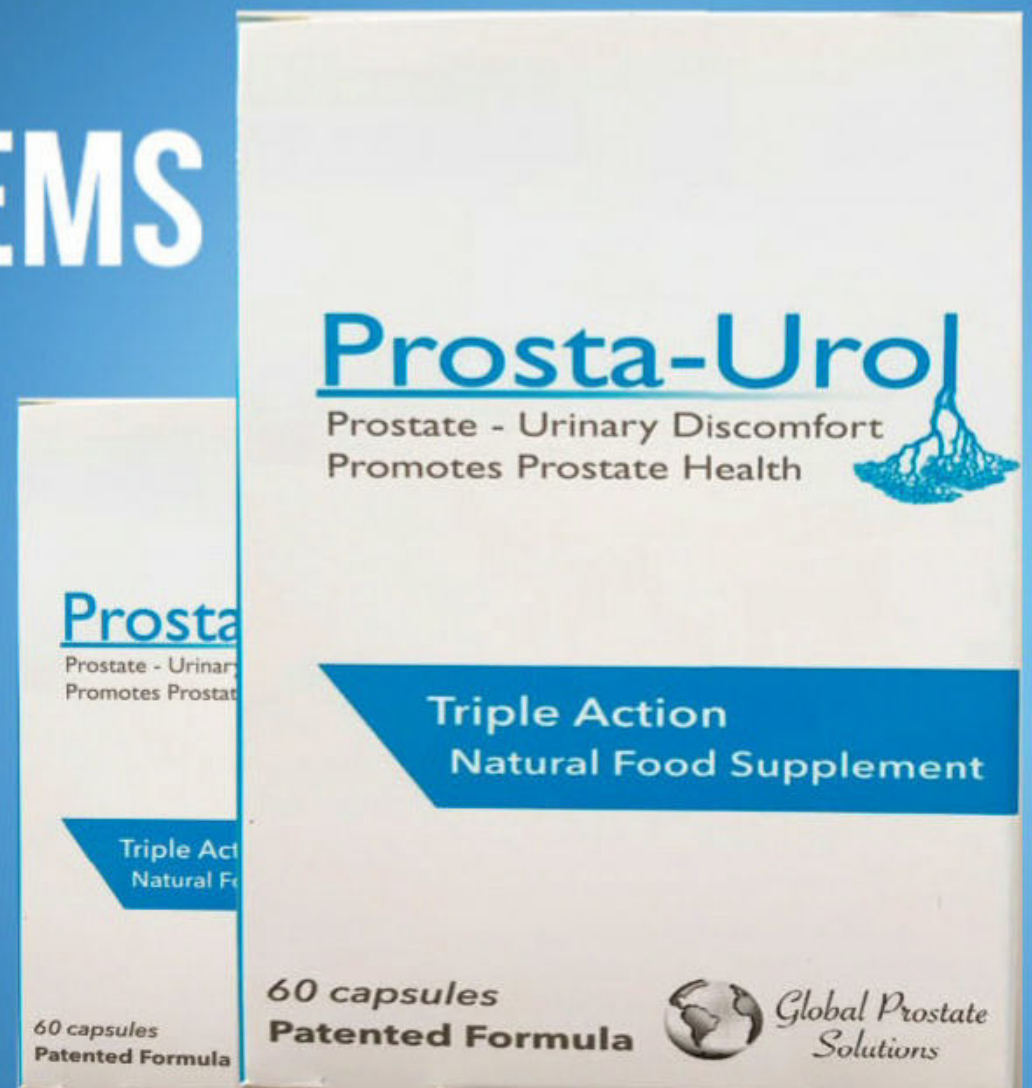
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# MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover Napoleonic events at the Iron Duke's London home, Charles II's battlefield headquarters and tours around Winston Churchill's sanctuary

*Apsley House was built between 1771-78 and faces south towards the Wellington Arch on the southeast corner of Hyde Park*



## WATERLOO AT "NUMBER 1, LONDON"

**Apsley House is the former home of the Duke of Wellington and is hosting special weekend events to commemorate two of his most famous battles**

Located in the heart of central London, Apsley House is a unique survival of an aristocratic townhouse in the capital. It was purchased by Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington in 1817 two years after his victory at the Battle of Waterloo. The house became known as "Number 1, London" and still reflects the styles and tastes of the 1820s. The architect Benjamin Dean Wyatt remodelled Apsley for Wellington and it contains important artworks as well as outstanding collections of porcelain and silver. Nevertheless, Apsley House is dominated by the legacy of the "Iron Duke" himself and in June and July it will host events to commemorate the decisive battles of Waterloo and Salamanca.

On the weekend of 15-16 June 2019, the house will focus on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Many items that were personally owned by Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte will be on display as well as real and replica weapons from the period. There will also be costumed re-enactors on hand to recreate life in Wellington's armies, including soldiers from the 95th Rifles and a Georgian barber-surgeon. Away from Napoleonic warfare, there is an opportunity to learn about Regency etiquette and social niceties within Apsley House.

On the actual anniversary of Waterloo (18 June), the Napoleonic re-enactor Stephen Wisdom will play "Captain Abs" and don the costumes of British and French regiments who fought at the battle from 6.30-8.30pm. His talk will include remarkable tales of bravery, derring-do and daily life from the battlefield.

A "Salamanca Weekend" will follow the Waterloo events on 20-21 July to commemorate Wellington's most famous victory of the Peninsular War. Fought in Spain in 1812, Salamanca demonstrated the duke's abilities as a master tactician and sealed his reputation as a general to be compared with Marlborough and Frederick the Great.

To mark the 207th anniversary of the battle, Apsley House will provide the backdrop to a vividly recreated military camp featuring the 68th Light Infantry Re-enactment Society. The Arbeau Dancers will also be teaching Regency dance steps within the house as well as a variety of talks and demonstrations throughout the day.

Apsley House can be found at 149 Piccadilly, Hyde Park Corner, W1J 7NT. The Waterloo and Salamanca weekend events are included with a normal entry ticket while English Heritage members go free. For more information and to book tickets visit: [www.wellingtoncollection.co.uk](http://www.wellingtoncollection.co.uk). You can also follow @Apsley House on Twitter, @houseapsley1817 on Instagram and "Apsley House" on Facebook.

*Military re-enactors will be a central part of the Waterloo and Salamanca weekend events*



*A Napoleonic sergeant attempts to recruit volunteers into Wellington's army*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.WELLINGTONCOLLECTION.CO.UK](http://WWW.WELLINGTONCOLLECTION.CO.UK)**



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.MUSEUMSWORCESTERSHIRE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.MUSEUMSWORCESTERSHIRE.ORG.UK)*Civil War reenactors  
pass the Commandery  
led by Charles I*

Image: Museums Worcestershire

## WORCESTER'S CIVIL WAR HERITAGE

The Commandery is an award-winning museum with a unique military history

Located in the heart of Worcester, the Commandery is a Grade I-listed building that was initially used as a medieval hospital. Its distinctive name possibly derives from the Knights Hospitaller who may have founded the site but its most famous military use came during the British Civil Wars. In September 1651 the building was used as the Royalist headquarters of Charles II during the Battle of Worcester, which was the final engagement of the wars.

The present museum opened in 1977 and for a while it was the only museum in England that was solely dedicated to the British Civil Wars. After a refurbishment in 2007 the Commandery has thrived and it won the Visit Worcestershire Awards for Excellence in 2018 for "Best Visitor

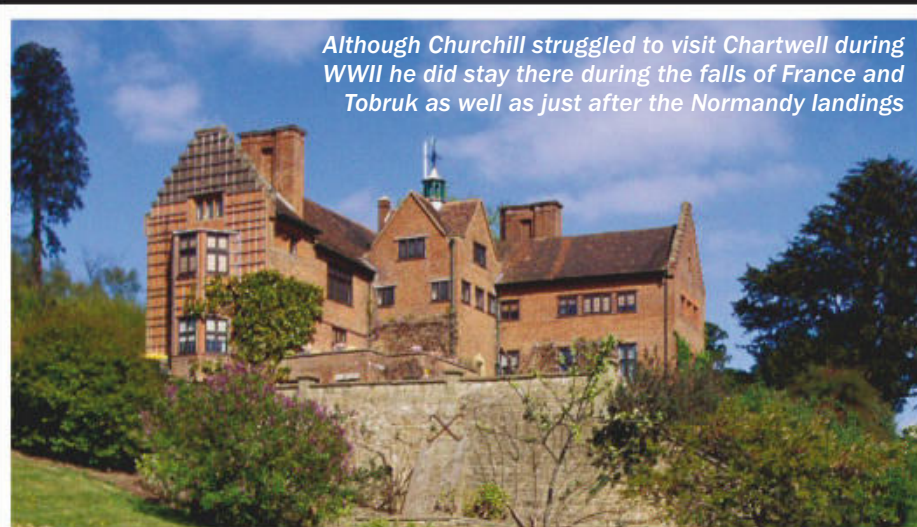
Attraction". It now has six permanent exhibitions about its history including "Worcester's Civil War Story". This is an interactive experience that unearths the city's divided past and the soldiers who marched hundreds of miles to the battle. Visitors can also test their skills at battlefield strategy and come face-to-face with Oliver Cromwell.

The Commandery is open everyday between February-December and is family-friendly. As well as the museum there are gardens to explore and an independent café called Commandery Coffee. There are also regular events including talks, live demonstrations and activities. On 20 June 2019 there will be a talk by the Battle of Worcester Society called "Civil War Petitions – Stories of Maimed Soldiers, War Widows and the Human Cost of War".

## INSIDE CHURCHILL'S RETREAT

Chartwell, the wartime prime minister's country home, is holding tours and exhibitions about the Churchill family's achievements

Located near Westerham, Kent, Chartwell was the home of Winston Churchill for over 40 years from 1922. The estate dated back to the 14th century but Churchill, who described the site as "the most beautiful and charming I have ever seen", largely extended and rebuilt the property. Chartwell was his refuge throughout his years



*Although Churchill struggled to visit Chartwell during WWII he did stay there during the falls of France and Tobruk as well as just after the Normandy landings*

of political wilderness but he could rarely visit it during his wartime premiership for security reasons.

Churchill returned to Chartwell almost immediately after VE Day and after his death it was bequeathed to the National Trust. Today the rooms remain much as they were when he lived there and contain pictures, books and personal mementoes. The hillside gardens also reflect Churchill's love of landscape and include lakes that he created along with a playhouse for his daughter.

Chartwell regularly hosts new exhibitions and talks about Churchill's life and this year there are themed house tours including "Clementine Churchill" and "Leadership and Legacy". The former discusses the prime minister's influential wife while the latter showcases Churchill's most treasured awards, honours and gifts. "Leadership and Legacy" also includes exclusive access to his bedroom.

The National Trust recommends that visitors book at least a day in advance for the tours, as spaces are limited to eight people.

For more information about tours, exhibitions and prices visit: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK)

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# NORMANDY AND THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

The United States Ambassador to Great Britain, **Robert Wood Johnson**, discusses how the Second World War still influences one of the world's most important military partnerships

**D**-Day and the Battle of Normandy not only paved the way for the liberation of Western Europe but was also critical in deepening the ties between the United States and Great Britain. The Allied success in France and beyond would not have been possible without extensive Anglo-American collaboration and the legacy of that momentous military achievement continues to shape transatlantic relations.

Seventy-five years since the Battle of Normandy, the 'Special Relationship' remains a fundamental bilateral partnership. The Ambassador of the United States to the Court of St James is regarded as one of the most prestigious positions in the United States Foreign Service and it's current incumbent is Robert Wood Johnson. In office since 29 August 2017, Johnson reflects on the sacrifices made in Normandy, the continuing importance of NATO and today's extensive military cooperation between the two countries.

## **To what extent was the Battle of Normandy a crucial stepping-stone in cementing Anglo-American relations?**

The special relationship America and Britain have today is built on those powerful moments in our history when we have stood side by side to face the most daunting challenges together. The Battle of Normandy was as tough a challenge as we have ever faced. Victory rested on our ability to accomplish immense feats of logistics and planning. We had to rapidly develop new technology to enable the invasion to happen and our military and intelligence forces learnt to communicate and coordinate more closely than ever before.

Never in human history had so many different nations worked so effectively together to achieve one mission – the liberation of Europe from Nazi tyranny. There has never been a finer achievement in the history of our alliance. This was what paved the way for the unbelievable trust and collaboration America and Britain have today – not only with each other, but with our allies in Five Eyes and NATO as well.

## **Seventy-five years after the beginning of the Allied liberation of Western Europe, how important is it that we remember the sacrifices made by those during the war?**

As time passes it becomes even more imperative that we remember the men and women who were willing to give everything for the free world we live in today. It would be an

act of gross negligence if we failed to preserve the memory of their sacrifices for future generations. The men and women who served our country in the Second World War were willing to do whatever it took to liberate the people of Europe. They were often young guys, not even old enough to buy their first beer back home. Nevertheless they found the courage to wade out of the landing craft, scale the cliffs, jump out of planes – to keep advancing even as the machine-guns fired and they saw their friends cut down around them. We should never forget what our World War II heroes did and why they did it. They were truly our 'greatest generation' and we should continue to be inspired by them.

## **To what extent do the United States and Great Britain cooperate today in terms of military and security commitments?**

We are the same close and steadfast allies we were 75 years ago. Our troops continue to fight side by side for the peace and prosperity of people across the globe. In NATO, our two countries still make by far the biggest contribution to the collective defence. We also still work exceptionally closely together on the technology that keeps us safe – for example, the UK was the only Tier 1 partner helping us to design our new F-35 fighter jet. And there is no country in the world whose intelligence and law enforcement agencies are trusted as America trusts Britain's. The alliance which took us to victory in the WWII continues today.

## **Since World War II, Europe has enjoyed its longest period of peace for centuries, which is largely thanks to the solidarity created by NATO. How important is the role of NATO in current American foreign policy to continuing this success?**

NATO is without doubt the most important alliance the world has ever seen. It was founded by people who had lived through the First and Second World Wars and saw those conflicts claim the lives of over a hundred million people. NATO was established as a way to prevent such terrible loss and suffering ever happening again.

It has been incredibly successful. For 70 years, it has preserved peace, protected our freedom, and defended our way of life. But NATO's work is not done.

We still face serious threats to our collective security – from the attacks against us in cyber space, to the generational fight against terrorism or the threats individual countries pose to our safety and security – and remember, it wasn't long ago that we saw Russia bold enough to deploy a military-grade nerve agent on British soil. NATO is as necessary today as the day it was founded.

## **Many democracies are today under threat from resurgences in far-right extremism. What can we learn from the Second World War to ensure that a similar event never occurs?**

Our D-Day heroes were ready to pay the ultimate price to stop oppression and tyranny and protect the rights and freedoms of others. The only way to truly honour their memories is to follow in their footsteps and continue to fight for the same principles. Intolerance and hatred must be confronted in all forms – and the US and UK will continue to lead the way in doing so. As Eisenhower once said, "To preserve his freedom of worship, his equality before law, his liberty to speak and act as he sees fit ... a Londoner will fight. So will a citizen of Abilene." Around the world, these rights are still under threat. Our response must be the same as it was 75 years ago – we have to stand up for what is right.

*General Dwight D. Eisenhower with Prime Minister Winston Churchill having just received the Freedom of the City of London, 12 June 1945*

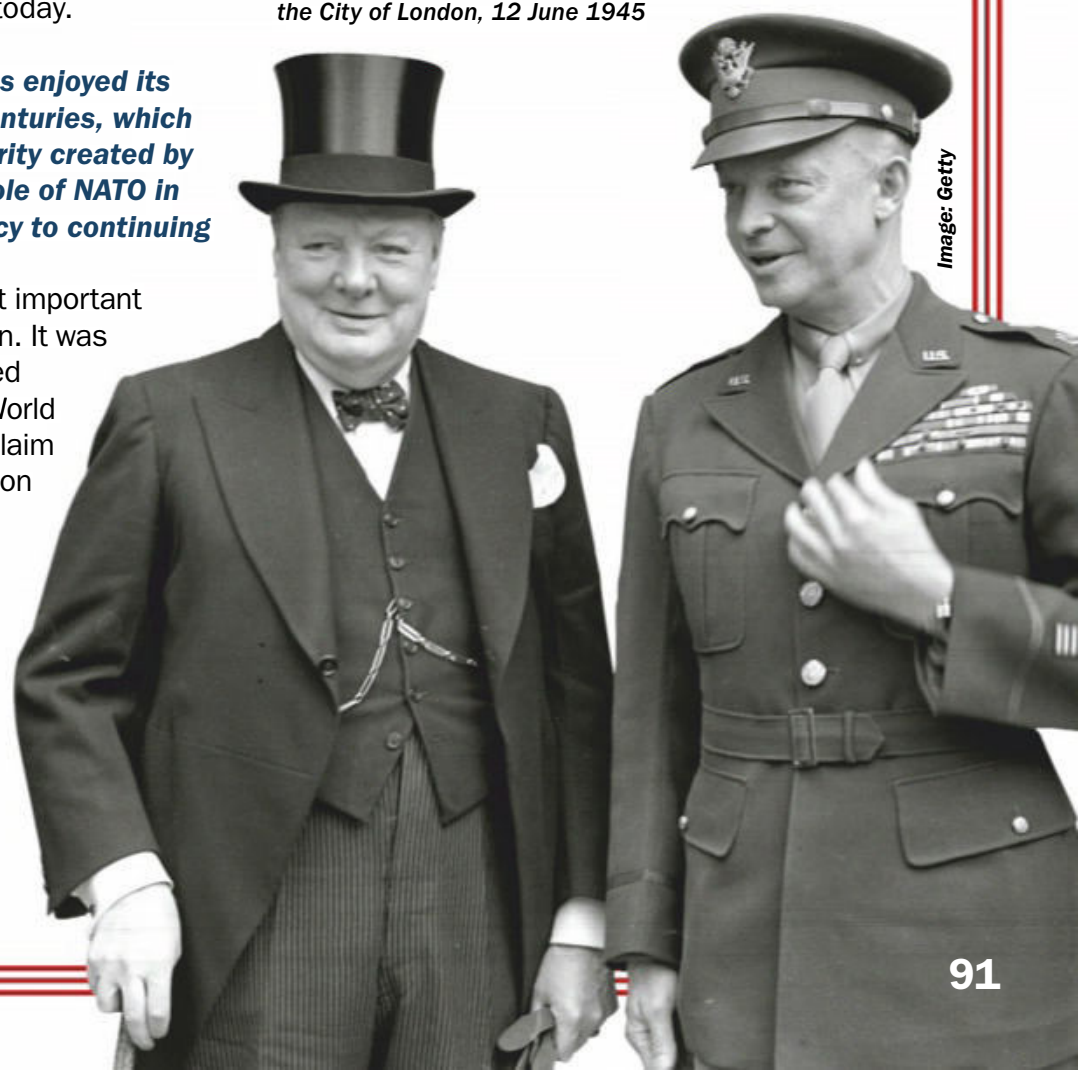


Image: Getty



# HISTORY WAR **REVIEWS**

Our pick of the latest military history books and games

## MEMOIR '44: NEW FLIGHT PLAN

RELEASED IN TIME FOR THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, THIS EXPANSION TO THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED MILITARY BOARD GAME PLUNGES PLAYERS INTO THE STRUGGLE FOR AIR SUPREMACY ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELDS OF WWII

**Publisher:** Days of Wonder

**RRP:** £48.99

**Released:** Out Now

**Players:** 2 (Requires a copy of *Memoir '44* base game)

**URL:** [www.asmodee.co.uk](http://www.asmodee.co.uk)

Originally released over 15 years ago, *Memoir '44* is an historical board game that turns players into WWII generals, taking command of little plastic armies across a range of realistic battlefield scenarios. This latest expansion, *New Flight Plan*, takes the action to the skies, with a host of new rules, figures and cards.

Inside the box are 16 unpainted but exquisitely produced aeroplane figures, including some of the most iconic aircraft of the period:

Messerschmitt Bf 109, Flying Fortress, Spitfire, F4U Corsair and more. For the purposes of the game's rules, these aircraft are separated into three categories – fighter, fighter/bomber, and bomber.

While those familiar with *Memoir '44*'s combat dice rolls and command cards will have no trouble adopting *New Flight Plan*'s rules, newcomers will certainly encounter a steeper learning curve. Players give orders to their aircraft using command cards, in the same way as with infantry and armour units. However they may also play new Air Combat cards to enable special abilities, dealing out extra damage to bunkers, tanks or infantry, for instance. When ordered, an aircraft can strafe targets with machine-gun fire, unleash bombing runs, or engage other aircraft in dogfights to dominate the skies.

Also included in the *New Flight Plan* box are 21 scenarios designed around the *New Flight Plan* rules, including bombing missions where players must successfully attack or defend an objective. It should be noted that several of these scenarios also require one or more of *Memoir*'s other myriad of available expansions – however, there is still plenty on offer here for owners of the base game only. TW





# DARK CITY

THERE WAS MORE TO WARTIME LONDON THAN STIFF UPPER LIPS. THE CITY'S BOMB-RAVAGED STREETS BECAME THE STALKING GROUNDS FOR KILLERS, RAPISTS, LOOTERS AND GANGS

**Author:** Simon Read **Publisher:** The History Press, 2019 **Price:** £10.99

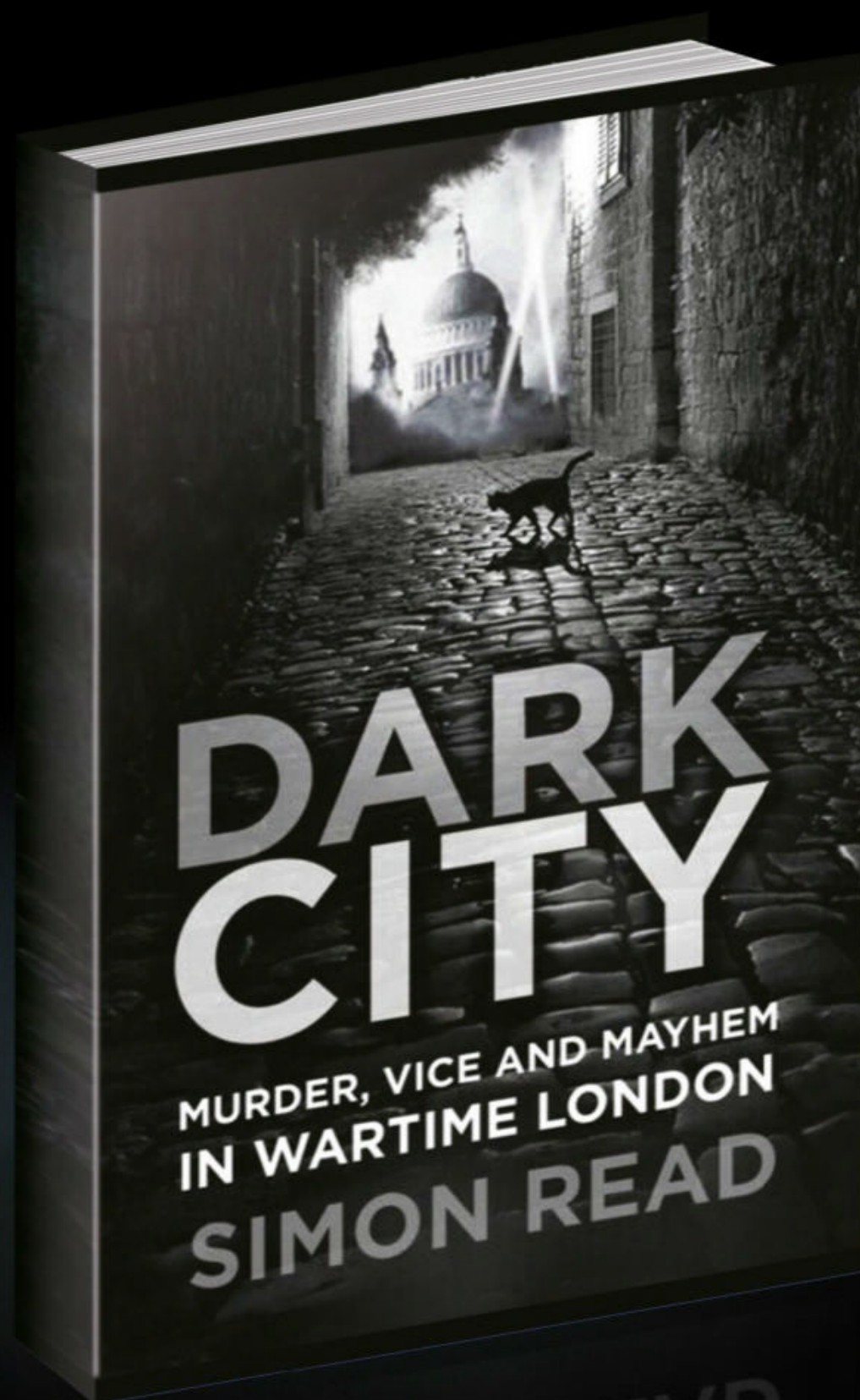
This book tells an uncomfortable tale: life was not all 'keep calm and carry on' in wartime London, an era we like to hold up as exemplary of camaraderie and a shared defiance of the German aerial onslaught on a besieged city. Simon Read paints a vivid picture of the other side of those years, in which the reader encounters sinister characters like Gordon Frederick Cummins, who earned the sobriquet the 'Blackout Ripper' for his ghastly work with razor blades and knives. Another dreadful character who features in the narrative is the necrophile John Cristie, the monster of Rillington Place, who strangled at least eight people at his Notting Hill flat. There is also John George Haigh, the 'Acid Bath' killer, who bludgeoned his victim to death, dumped him into a drum with sulphuric acid and later finding the body a lump of sludge, poured it down a manhole.

The turmoil of war provided cover to those who worked with blades, guns and more sinister tools. Read points to the fact that in a city where death was always near and a tidy sum could be made on the most basic household item, many gave in to their baser instincts. Rationing, blackouts and the severe limitations under which the police worked, came together to create a criminal's paradise. The number of bodies retrieved during the Blitz made it impossible for the authorities to autopsy them all. Those who did not escape police investigations, such as the three aforementioned villains, went to their end on the end of a rope. **JS**

*Below: John George Haigh, commonly known as the Acid Bath Murderer, was an English serial killer. He was convicted for the murders of six people, although he claimed to have killed nine*



**“THE TURMOIL OF WAR PROVIDED COVER TO THOSE WHO WORKED WITH BLADES, GUNS AND MORE SINISTER TOOLS”**



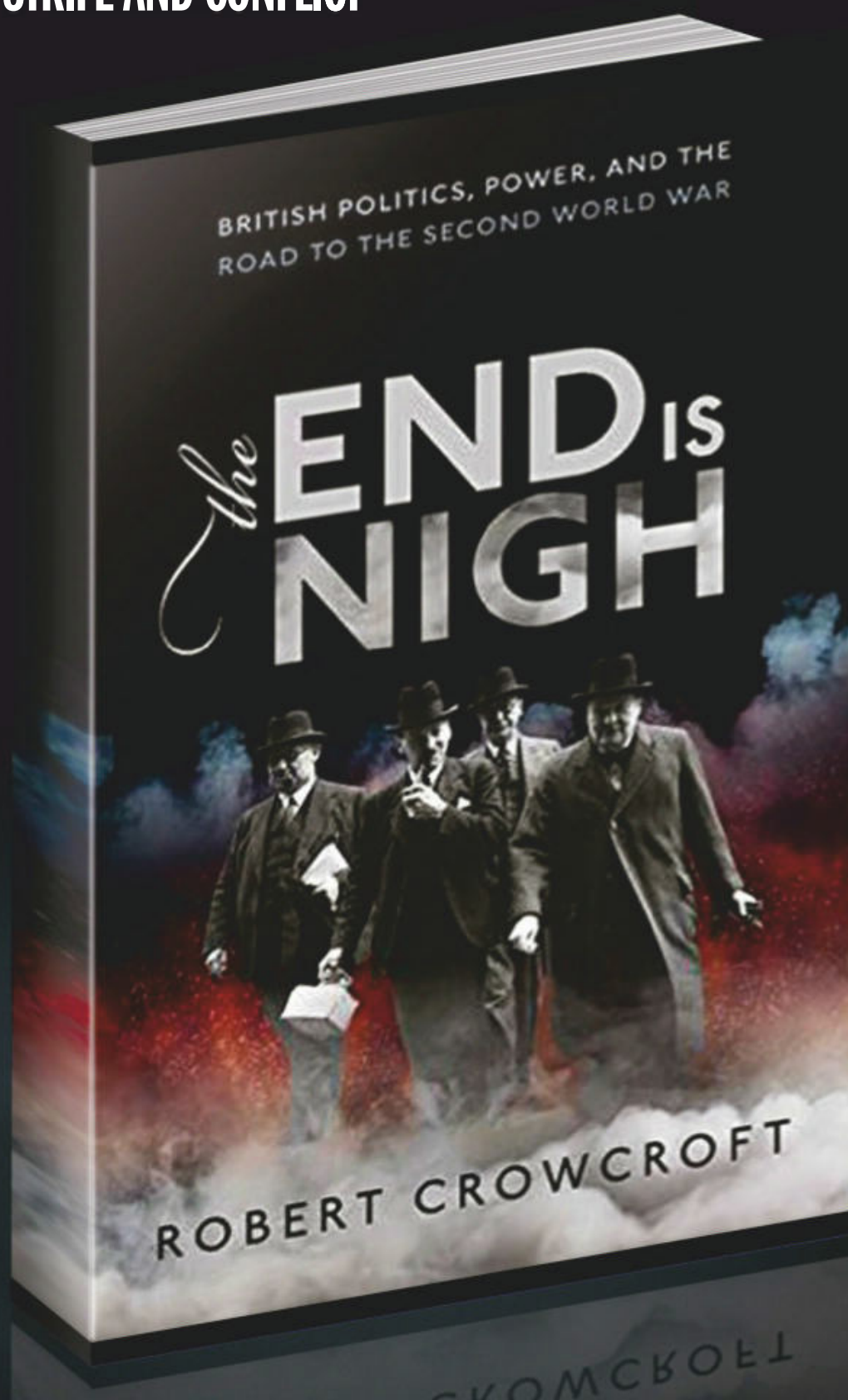


# THE END is NIGH

BRITAIN'S LIFE AS A GREAT POWER DEPENDED ON INGENUITY AND GOOD JUDGEMENT, BUT IN THE 1930S  
THE COUNTRY'S EXECUTIVE AND PARLIAMENT PROVED WANTING

**Author:** Robert Crowcroft **Publisher:** Oxford University Press, 2018 **Price:** £25.00

**“THE BOOK REVEALS THAT BRITISH POLITICS IN THE 1930S AMOUNTED TO A CYNICAL STORY OF STRIFE AND CONFLICT”**



“A tale of relentless intrigue, burning ambition and bitter rivalry in British politics.” So declares the jacket blurb of Robert Crowcroft’s book. Readers might be tempted to assume the author has produced a quickie account of the current Brexit cataclysm in Westminster. But no, this story deals with a far more lethal scenario, that of the years leading up to the Second World War and the roles played by its leading British public figures: Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain, Anthony Eden, Ernest Bevin and other actors in this dramatic portrayal of a world about to explode. Plus ça change.

Crowcroft says that one of the most important aspects of the repository of national stories associated with the 1930s is how and why the war occurred. He argues that a series of robust national myths was constructed to answer these questions. These tales served as a cultural anaesthetic, authored during the post-war years by Churchill, the Labour Party, the media, intellectuals and the public as well. This quickly became part of the British people’s mental map and there it remains entrenched to this day.

The book reveals that British politics in the 1930s amounted to a cynical story of strife and conflict, at a time when the country was confronted by acute threats to its global power. There quickly developed a dialectical relationship between the struggle for power at Westminster and the question of how to address these threats. With world peace and the future of the British Empire at stake, the battle for power was conducted in terms of individual relations, rivalries and enmities. Personal affairs between the most influential leaders took centre stage. Strategic issues were understood in terms of the political capital they might yield.

The country’s rise to world dominance in the 18th century had been achieved by strategic innovation and dynamism, coupled with an ability to persuade other powers to do things they did not want to do, in order to further British interests. “This ability was lacking when Britain needed it once again in the 1930s,” the author says. He makes a persuasive case that during the crucial years leading up to war, the British political class lacked ingenuity and good judgement, as well as the capacity to think the unthinkable. The sheer ruthlessness the situation demanded was nowhere to be found.

The centrality of foreign affairs to high politics created a situation in which strategy was consistently subordinated to conflict in Westminster and Whitehall. It becomes clear in these pages that grave consequences follow when leaders fail. The result in this case was a sequence of predictable failures, which eventually culminated in political disaster, with the outcome of a waning of British power at the hands of leaders unsuited to wielding it.

Crowcroft’s myth-busting analysis of Britain’s road to war throws up a challenge to the dominant Churchillian interpretation of events, as well as the resilient national fables that have been built upon it. Journeying from the corridors of Whitehall to the smoking rooms of Parliament, and from aircraft factories to summit meetings with Hitler, the book offers a fresh and provocative interpretation of one of the most decisive moments of British history. **JS**



# WAR & PEACE

## FDR'S FINAL ODYSSEY D-DAY TO YALTA, 1943-1945

NIGEL HAMILTON FINISHES UP HIS TRILOGY OF BOOKS ON PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT ON ANOTHER CONTROVERSIAL NOTE

**Author** Nigel Hamilton **Publisher** Houghton Mifflin Harcourt **Price** £20.00

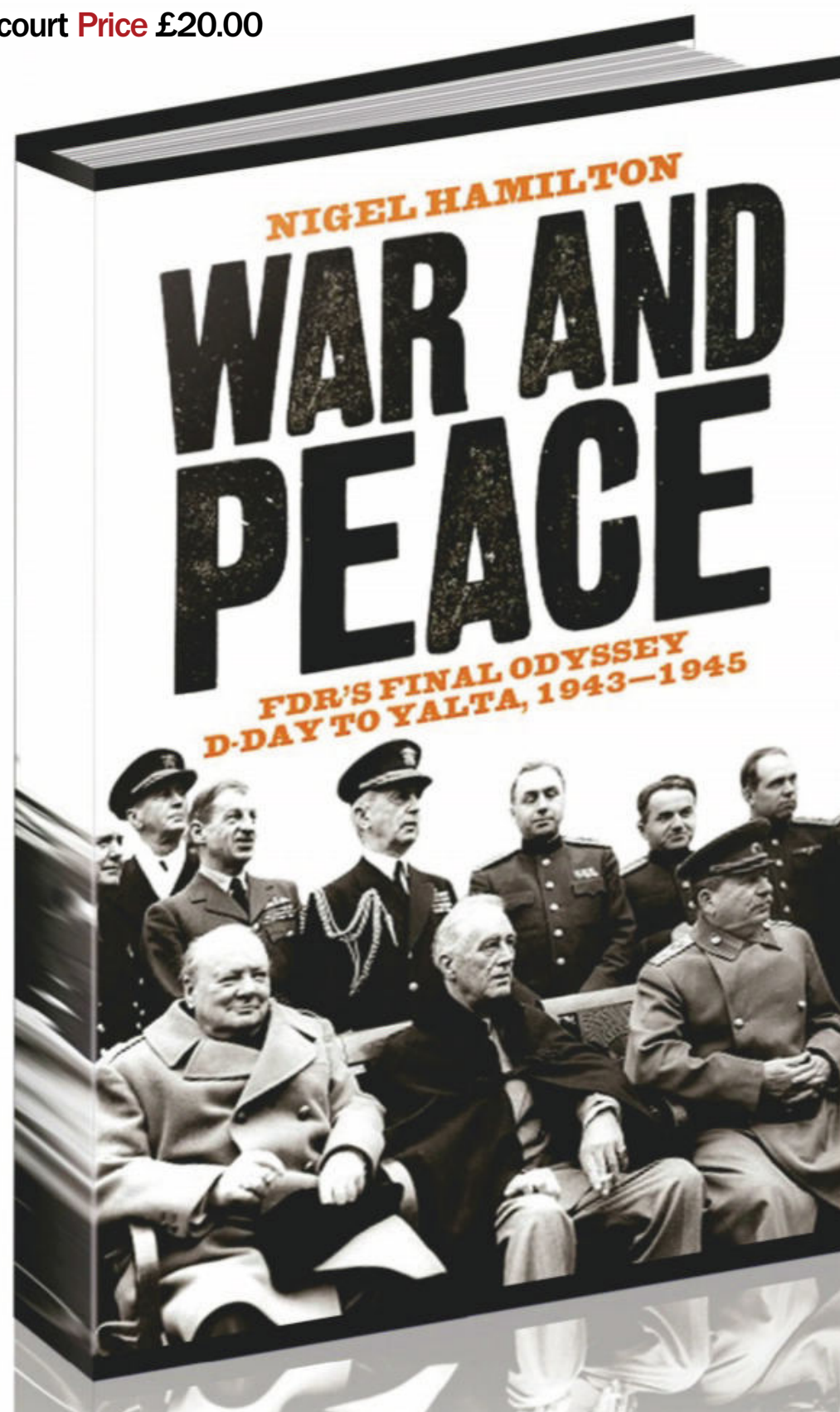
The third and final instalment of Nigel Hamilton's trilogy on the wartime record of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *War And Peace* takes the reader into the last months of the U.S. President's life as World War II enters its climatic phase. Here we find FDR in his third term in office (he would go on to win a record fourth presidential election before he died), but the once seemingly powerful American leader is now suffering rapidly declining health. Under normal circumstances he might have had little choice but to step away from the demanding rigours of political life in war, but with so much at stake, not just for America but for much of the world, FDR was determined to win the peace. Sadly, he would not live to see that peace, but his extraordinary efforts were instrumental in the final defeat of Nazi Germany.

Hamilton is an award-winning writer and broadcaster who has penned several notable, and sometimes controversial, biographies on prominent historical figures, including: *The Full Monty: Montgomery Of Alamein 1887-1942*; *JFK: Reckless Youth*; and *Bill Clinton: Mastering The Presidency*. Although British-born, he is now an American citizen living in Boston, where he is a senior fellow at the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, University of Massachusetts. He is, therefore, well-placed to produce this epic trilogy of one of America's greatest presidents.

Those familiar with Hamilton's previous work in this trilogy will be aware of his unending praise for FDR while viewing British Prime Minister Winston Churchill with near contempt, a theme he continues in this volume. He argues that the British wartime leader was erratic and somewhat amateurish, often advocating hairbrained schemes that threatened to take the Allies off course. Conversely, Hamilton portrays FDR as steadier and more level-headed, holding out against Churchill's resistance to the Normandy landings and steering the Allies to victory under American leadership. In short, the author sees FDR as the driving force behind the eventual Allied success, whereas if Churchill had got his way the outcome may perhaps have been different.

Such an opinion will undoubtedly draw criticism from other historians, who will counter Hamilton's view by arguing that Churchill showed the greatest determination to resist Hitler, even in the darkest years of the war when Allied defeat seemed almost inevitable – a determination that never left him. Had it not been for his dogged refusal to give in to Nazi tyranny, it is perhaps safe to say the war would indeed have ended very differently. Churchill's supporters will also point out his better understanding of Stalin and the future threat that would be posed by the Soviet Union in a post-war world.

This controversial debate continues. Nevertheless, Hamilton has produced an incredibly well-researched and engrossingly written biography of FDR, which will greatly add to our understanding of the man and what drove him in his quest for peace and a better post-war world. FDR could have stepped aside to address his poor health but instead chose to struggle on, likely knowing he was headed for an early grave. **MS**



**"HAMILTON HAS PRODUCED AN INCREDIBLY WELL-RESEARCHED AND ENGROSSINGLY WRITTEN BIOGRAPHY OF FDR, WHICH WILL GREATLY ADD TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAN"**



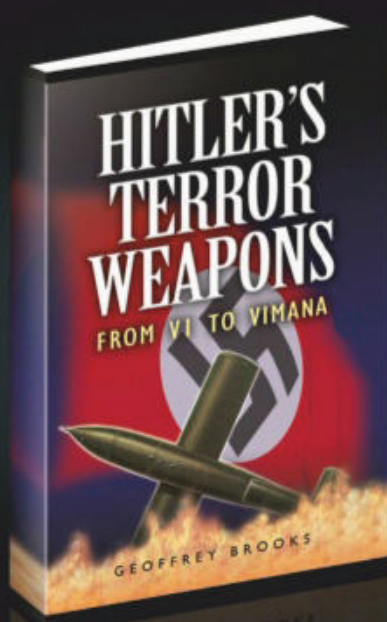
# V WEAPONS

The development, and successful destruction, of the Nazi 'vengeance' weapons has attracted widespread attention from historians across the decades

## Target London: Under Attack From The V-Weapons During Wwii *Christy Campbell*

*Target London* recounts both the intelligence operations tasked with detecting the Nazis' Vergeltungswaffen, or 'vengeance weapons', and also provides a fascinating insight into key figures involved. With great focus on the internal debates and reactions within the British high command in response to the V weapon threat, the narrative plunges the reader back to the interwar years, and forward again into the early period of the Cold War.

**"THE NARRATIVE PLUNGES THE READER BACK TO THE INTERWAR YEARS, AND FORWARD INTO THE EARLY PERIOD OF THE COLD WAR"**



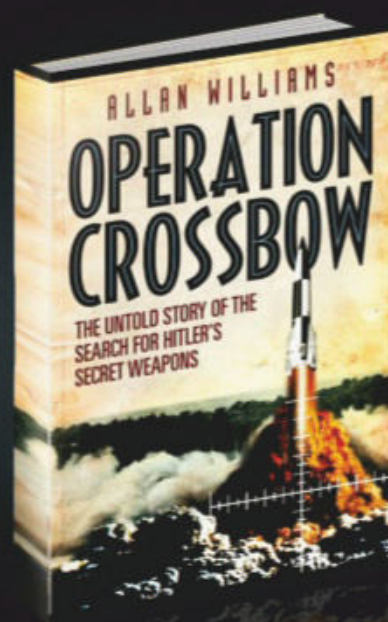
## Hitler's Terror Weapons From V-1 To V-2 *Geoffrey Brooks*

As the title may suggest, this work charts the development and deployment of more than just the V-1 flying bomb and V-2 rocket. A respected authority on the Third Reich, Brooks also delves into the Nazis' more unusual and elusive weapons experiments and prototypes.



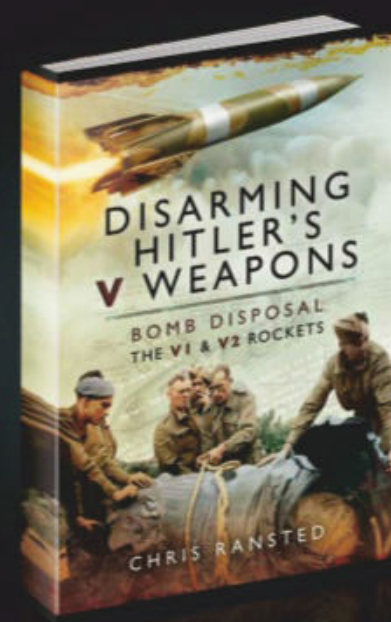
## V Weapons Hunt – Defeating German Secret Weapons *Colonel Roy Stanley*

Making good use of aerial reconnaissance photography, as well as his own background in military intelligence, Colonel Stanley takes the reader through the story of the V weapons from the Allied perspective, from the first sighting of a V-1, to the Allied missions to destroy V-2 launch sites.



## Operation Crossbow: The Untold Story Of The Search For Hitler's Secret Weapons *Allan Williams*

This thorough history relates the little-known story of the intelligence missions directed from Danesfield House, Buckinghamshire. Thousands of interpreters and intelligence analysts were involved in Operation Crossbow, which identified the gradual construction of V-1 launch sites across France.



## Disarming Hitler's V Weapons: Bomb Disposal – The V-1 & V-2 Rockets *Chris Ransted*

Following the Allied invasion of occupied France, the British and Americans began coming across the remnants of the Nazis' V-weapon arsenal. This book explains how disposal experts went about destroying the weapons, and in the process uncovered the secrets of their design.



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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf,  
London, E14 5HU [www.marketforce.co.uk](http://www.marketforce.co.uk) Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 2054-376X

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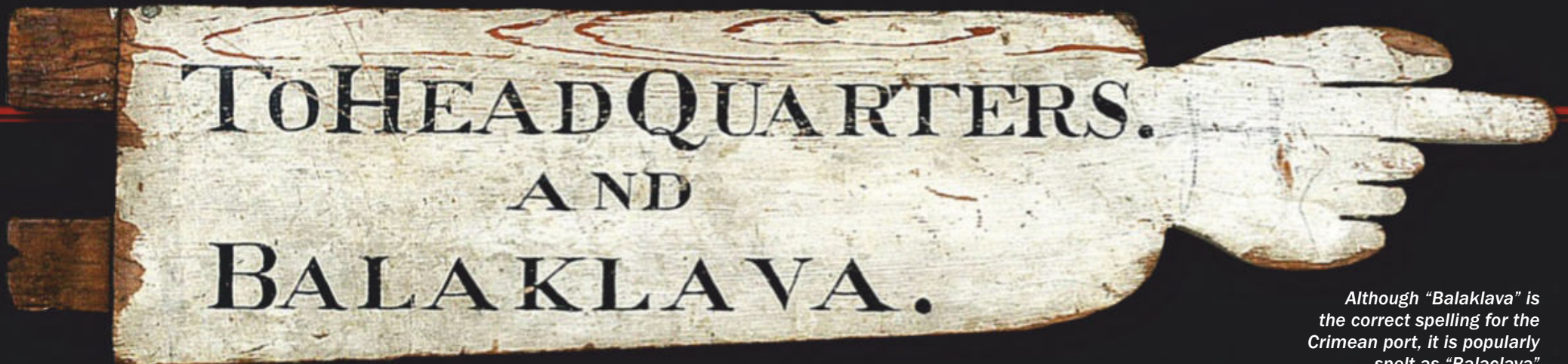
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# CRIMEAN WAR SIGNPOST



Although "Balaklava" is the correct spelling for the Crimean port, it is popularly spelt as "Balaclava"

This rare object points in the direction of a battle that simultaneously defined the British Army's courage and incompetence

**T**he Battle of Balaklava was one of the most famous, if controversial engagements, of the Crimean War. Fought on 25 October 1854, the battle was an Allied attempt of British, French and Ottoman troops to capture the important Russian naval base of Sevastopol. The British-Allied force of 28,000 men first moved to the southern port of Balaklava where they encountered 25,000 Russian troops.

Balaklava was the scene of the famously successful "Thin Red Line" defence of 250 Scottish soldiers against 2,500 Russians. However, the battle also became known for the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade where misinterpreted orders led to the most infamous cavalry charge in military history. These mixed outcomes led to an indecisive result and the battle restricted Allied

movements between Balaklava and Sevastopol. The latter would not fall until September 1855 and as a result the British became more entrenched in the Crimea.

One indication of the almost static nature of the conflict is the existence of this unusual wooden signpost. With a distinctive whitewashed hand, the sign points right "To Headquarters and Balaklava". It came into the possession of Cornet John Gibsone of the 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons, who was commissioned on 8 December 1854. His unit had fought hard as an integral part of the Charge of the Light Brigade but Gibsone himself did not arrive in the Crimea until 14 July 1855. He brought this sign back to Britain and although it is simply designed its cartoonish style gives some sense of the British Army's humour in adversity.

NATIONAL  
**ARMY**  
MUSEUM

The Balaklava signpost is held in the collections of the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. For more information visit: [www.nam.ac.uk](http://www.nam.ac.uk)

Image: National Army Museum, Shutterstock

The 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons was a key cavalry component that made up the Charge of the Light Brigade







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